

Study Guide for Introducing Christian Doctrine, 2nd ed., by Millard J. Erickson

Ch. 1

What is the subject matter that doctrine deals with?

State and explain the five facets of the definition of theology in your own words.

Why is the study of theology necessary? What are the three reasons that Erickson gives?

What are other possible reasons?

Explain why theology may be considered a science.

Describe at least one way in which theology is different from other 'sciences'.

Identify the potential sources for Christian doctrine, and explain why this question is important.

Which source does Erickson believe is the primary source?

Describe the process of doing theology and illustrate how it should be done.

State each of the nine steps of doing theology in your own words.

Ch. 2

What is the reason that evangelical theology has avoided decline? What is the significance of this truth for your own theology?

What are the three lessons to be learned about the present-day theological environment, and what is the significance of each?

Name and briefly describe the theories of what constitutes the permanent elements of Christianity that Erickson mentions? Which does Erickson advocate? Why? Do you agree? Why or Why not?

Compare and contrast the messenger's view with the transformer's view and with the translator's view of contemporizing theology today. Which does Erickson think is the most appropriate and why? Which do you think is best and why?

Describe the five criteria for determining the permanent, timeless essence of a doctrine in your own words.

Do you think that Erickson is suggesting that if a Biblical truth cannot be shown to be the timeless essence of a doctrine by these five criteria, then it is necessarily not a doctrine to be believed and obeyed and can be rejected or ignored? What is the significance of this position for your personal life and ministry?

Ch. 3

In your own words, describe the Premodern approach to theology and life.

Define the word "teleological".

Define "basic realism".

What is a "correspondence theory of truth"?

In your own words, explain the ten points made about the Modern approach to theology and life.

Contrast the Premodern approach with the Modern approach.

Reviewing the characteristics of modernity, how did they influence and affect theology during the period characterized as "modern"?

What four things are mentioned as causes for the breakdown of the Modern view?

In comparison to thoughts and ideals of scientists and philosophers of the modern period, what changes in perspective have occurred in the postmodern period?
Describe how radical postmodernism has influenced the disciplines of literary criticism, philosophy and history.
Considering the values and morals of the postmodern age, what do you believe the theologians of the post-postmodern age will have to contend with?
What elements of radical postmodernism does Erickson suggest we must reject or resist?
How does our thinking from a particular perspective impact our theological understanding?
Explain the point Erickson makes about the truth being absolute, but our knowledge of the truth being relative.
How should we construct a responsible criticism of radical postmodernism?
Does Erickson favor political correctness? Why or why not? Do you agree?
According to Erickson, how does humility aid in doing theology?
Describe the kind of “community” that Erickson suggests we interact with in doing theology.
How does postmodernism impact evangelism and apologetics?

Ch. 4

Define the word “Revelation” in your own words.
What are the two basic classifications of revelation? How are they different?
Define the term “General Revelation” in your own words.
What are the three traditional modes of general revelation? How does God reveal Himself in each of these three areas?
Define the term “Natural Theology” in your own words. What are the positions that Christians have taken toward natural theology?
Describe and evaluate the assumptions of natural theology.
Describe Thomas Aquinas’ contribution to the idea of natural theology. Do you agree? Why or why not?
What are the two major arguments which have been employed in developing a natural theology?
Summarize the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, the anthropological argument and the ontological argument in your own words.
What makes natural theology ineffective in bringing the Christian message to the unbeliever?
What do the nature Psalms, Romans 1-2 and Acts 14 tell us about the idea of general revelation?
What is the position of John Calvin on general revelation? Do you agree? Why or why not?
According to Erickson, what is the proper conclusion all people should make about themselves based only on general revelation?
Based on this discussion, do you think someone can possibly be saved without special revelation? Why or why not? How does this impact your idea of evangelism and world missions?
Restate the six implications of General Revelation in your own words.

What difference does your understanding of general revelation make for your life and ministry?

Ch. 5

Define “Special Revelation” in your own words. Why is special revelation necessary? What is the nature of special revelation? What is the objective/purpose of special revelation?

What is the relationship of special revelation to general revelation?

Name and describe three characteristics of special revelation. What does each contribute to your understanding of special revelation? What does each contribute to your understanding of God?

Define the term “Anthropic” in your own words. How does the Anthropic nature of special revelation impact the way we do theology?

Define the term “Analogical” in your own words. How does the Analogical nature of special revelation impact the way we do theology?

Through what three means has God chosen to reveal Himself? How does each contribute to our understanding of special revelation?

Describe some of the forms of divine speech.

What is the relationship between a historical event and the interpretation of the event? Is one of these more of a revelation from God than the other? Why or why not? If so, which one?

Define the term “The Incarnation”. How is this a mode of revelation? What about Jesus and His life is revelation from God?

Do you agree with the neoorthodox view of the relative importance of personal and propositional revelation? Why or why not? What difference does it make for your life and ministry?

How is propositional and personal revelation related to trust?

How would you compare and contrast personal and propositional revelation? Which is more important and why?

How is the Bible related to God’s revelation? How does the definition of “revelation” help to answer this question?

Define the term “Progressive Revelation”. How does this idea affect the way we do theology?

Ch. 6

Define “inspiration” in your own words.

How is inspiration different from revelation? How are they related? Given the fact of special revelation, why was inspiration necessary?

Why is inspiration so important to the authority of Scripture?

In what ways does the Bible witness to its divine origins?

What does Erickson mean by an argument of circularity? How does he suggest the idea of inspiration avoids that charge?

What are the five theories of inspiration and which one makes the most sense to you and why?

What does Erickson mean by “the Extent of Inspiration”? What does Erickson think is the extent of inspiration? Why does it matter?

What does Erickson mean by “the Intensiveness of Inspiration”? What does Erickson think is the intensiveness of inspiration? Why does it matter?
What are the two methods that Erickson uses to investigate the theory of inspiration?
What is the point being made about ‘magnification’ and ‘precision’? Why does it matter?
Does Erickson suggest that the Biblical writers were inspired, or the texts themselves?
How would you summarize the characteristics that should be included in an appropriate model of inspiration?
What are the implications and practical applications of the fact of inspiration of the Bible?

Ch. 7

Briefly define inerrancy and state why it is important to you in living the Christian life. What does it mean to say absolute, full, or limited inerrancy? What is the difference(s) between these three positions?
Historically, what has happened to other areas of doctrine when inerrancy has been abandoned?
What is the epistemological importance of inerrancy? What happens to epistemology when inerrancy is abandoned or weakened?
Considering the discrepancies between parallel passages in Scripture, is there reason to discard inerrancy altogether?
Explain each of the five points Erickson makes in defining Inerrancy in your own words. Compare and contrast Erickson’s view on commands being “true” with Packer’s (ch. 11, last weeks reading).
What are the three ancillary issues concerning inerrancy, and what is the author’s response to them?
What is your conclusion to the question of inerrancy? How does this affect your life?

Ch. 8

Define the term Religious Authority in your own words. What is the crucial question about religious authority?
How does God typically exercise His authority, according to Erickson?
For what reasons is the Holy Spirit needed if we are to understand the Bible and be certain of its truth? What problems does the Holy Spirit overcome?
What is the importance of 1 Corinthians 2:14 in relation to the Holy Spirit? What is the problem that is overcome by the Holy Spirit’s working?
Compare and contrast the one time work of the Spirit in regeneration and the ongoing work of the Spirit in the life of the believer.
Does Erickson suggest that the work of the Spirit is primarily to reveal new truth that was previously unknown?
Compare and contrast the objective and subjective components of authority. Which is more important? How are they related?
Define Reason according to the way Erickson uses the term.
Explain the relationship between the Bible and reason as it relates to Biblical hermeneutics and apologetics.
Ignore Erickson’s section on Historical and Normative Authoritativeness.

Ch. 9

According to Erickson, why is there a need for a correct understanding of God?

Define “Immanence” in your own words. Why is the truth of God’s immanence important to your life and ministry?

Define “Transcendence” in your own words. Why is the truth of God’s transcendence important to your life and ministry?

What difficulties arise when we overemphasize either immanence or transcendence?

Describe each of Erickson’s implications of Immanence in your own words. Do you agree? Why or why not? Why does it matter?

Describe each of Erickson’s implications of Transcendence in your own words. Do you agree? Why or why not? Why does it matter?

Define “Attributes” in your own words.

How do we confuse God’s attributes with God’s acts? Give some examples.

What is the relationship between God’s essence and his attributes?

What are the two categories in which Erickson will speak of the attributes of God in subsequent chapters?

Ch. 10

Name and describe each of the attributes of God’s greatness in your own words.

Define “Spirituality” as it has to do with God in your own words. What is the significance of this truth for life?

Define “Life” as it has to do with God in your own words. What is the significance of this truth for life?

Define “Personality” as it has to do with God in your own words. What is the significance of this truth for life?

Define “Infinity” as it has to do with God in your own words. What is the significance of this truth for life?

Why is God’s infinity in terms of space a tension between God’s immanence and transcendence?

Define “Constancy” as it has to do with God in your own words. What is the significance of this truth for life?

Explain the qualification of the all-powerful character of God. Why are they significant?

What does it mean to say that God is free? What does it matter if God is free in this way?

Ch. 11

What are the moral attributes of God, and why are they necessary to an adequate understanding of His true nature?

Define “Holiness” in your own words. How does the concept of holiness apply to your everyday life?

What is the importance of the holiness of God and why is it so difficult for humans to understand this aspect of God’s nature?

Define “Righteousness” in your own words. Why does God’s righteousness matter for your life and ministry?

Define “Justice” in your own words. Why is this concept important?

Define “Integrity” in your own words. How is this a unifying concept for those attributes listed under its heading?

Define “Genuineness” in your own words. How does God’s genuineness move you to worship?

Define “Veracity” in your own words. How does God’s veracity inform how we should live?

Define “Faithfulness” in your own words. How has God shown His faithfulness in your life? How should you respond?

Define “Love” as it applies to God. How is this definition of love different from our societies definition of love?

How does our understanding of Jesus help us especially to understand the love of God?

Define “Benevolence” in your own words. What is our proper response to God’s benevolence?

Define “Grace” in your own words. How is God’s grace related to His justice and fairness?

Define “Mercy” in your own words. How is mercy different from grace? How are they similar?

Define “Persistence” in your own words. How does God want His persistence to relate to our persistence?

Some have contended that there is tension between God’s justice and His love. How would you respond to such a charge?

Ch. 12

Define the term (concept) Trinity

What kind of questions does the concept of Trinity answer?

Explain the biblical evidence for the Trinity.

What are the three truths that combine to make the doctrine of Trinity?

In which book of the Bible do we find the strongest evidence of a coequal Trinity? Explain why this is so.

Define and differentiate the Economic View, Dynamic Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, and the Orthodox view.

How may the various historical views of the Trinity be disputed?

Define ousia.

Define hypostasis [plural hypostases].

How does the Orthodox formula guard itself against the error of tritheism?

Describe in your own words the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity? How do they help our understanding and deepen our faith?

What do analogies contribute to our understanding?

Ch. 13

Explain the term “foreordain” in your own words.

Explain the term “predestinate” in your own words.

According to Erickson, what is the difference between these two terms?

Define “election”. Define “reprobation”. How do these two terms relate to predestination.

How does the Old Testament view all events in relationship to God’s will and working?

What is the general New Testament teaching on the divine plan and purpose?

Explain each of the nine characteristics of God’s plan in your own words.

What does Erickson claim is the ultimate purpose of God's plan? Do you agree? Why or Why not? What difference does it make?

What kind of things does God's plan include? How comprehensive is His plan? How does He typically work out His plan? How does all of this make you think and feel about all of the events in your own life? How should you respond to and apply your understanding of God's plan?

What is the Calvinist understanding of God's plan? What is the Arminian understanding of God's plan? How are they similar? How are they different? Which do you think is more Biblical? Why?

What does human freedom mean in the moderately Calvinistic model? What are the alternatives?

According to Erickson, how is God's will related to human freedom? How is human freedom defined? What are the objections to Erickson's argument? Do you agree with Erickson's position? Why or why not?

Why does Erickson distinguish between two senses of the term "God's will"? Do you think this distinction does justice to the Biblical teaching? Why or why not?

What are the two points that Erickson makes to respond to the accusation that God's election removes the motivation for human action? Do you think these adequately respond to the issue?

What does Erickson say is the measure of our service to God?

What are the views of history that people have suggested? What is the Christian view? How is the Christian view different from other views? How does the Christian view apply to our everyday lives?

Ch. 14

Define "creation" in your own words.

Why is the doctrine of creation important? Explain all six reasons in your own words.

How does the doctrine of creation influence other doctrines?

What are the elements of a biblical understanding of creation? Explain each in your own words.

What does the phrase "*ex nihilo*" mean? Why is this concept important?

How is each person of the Trinity involved in creation?

What is the primary purpose of creation?

What is the theological meaning of the doctrine of creation? Explain each point in your own words.

Is it legitimate to speak of artists creating in the same way that God creates? Why or why not?

What theological mistakes does the doctrine of creation protect us from? How does it help us in these areas?

How does the doctrine of creation relate to modern science? What is the nature of the disagreements, according to Erickson?

How does Erickson's discussion relate to your understanding of Biblical Inerrancy? How does the idea of inerrancy influence this subject? How does Schaeffer's view apply to this question?

What are the two "books" that Erickson mentions? How are they related? Does one have priority?

What attempts have been made to reconcile the apparent age of the earth with the biblical material, and what do they suggest? Which approach(es) do you think is/are better? Why?

What attempts have been made to reconcile the apparent development of species with the biblical material, and what do they suggest? Which approach(es) do you think is/are better? Why?

Do you agree with Erickson's conclusions? Why or why not?

What are the implications of a doctrine of creation? How does this apply to your life and ministry?

Ch. 15

Define "providence" in your own words. How is it related to the doctrine of creation?

Why is providence important to a doctrine of God? Why is it important to Christian life?

How would Christian life be different if the doctrine of providence were not true?

What two aspects of providence are important to Christian understanding, and how are they presented in Scripture?

Define "preservation" in your own words. What idea does the doctrine of preservation implicitly deny?

How does the doctrine of preservation address the experience of trial and suffering in the life of the Christian?

How is the Biblical doctrine of preservation different than the deistic idea or the celestial repairman idea? What does this tell us about the level of involvement that God has with all of life? How does this idea impact the way that you live?

Define "government" in your own words.

What is the extent of God's governing activity? Why does this matter? How does this related to your life and ministry?

What are the ways in which God can relate to sin? Can you think of a Biblical example and a personal example of each of these possibilities?

Explain in your own words each of Erickson's Implications of God's Governing activity.

Why is there concern over the role of prayer? How does Erickson suggest this problem can be solved? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Define "miracles" in your own words. How are they related to the wider idea of providence?

How are miracles related to the providence of God?

What are the three ways that miracles have been related to the laws of nature? Which of these do you think is most Biblical? Why?

What are the purposes for miracles described by Erickson? How is each of these purposes important?

How is the character of the God who is provident important to the idea of providence?

How would the idea of providence change if God had a different character and different attributes than He does?

Ch. 16

What is the problem of evil? Why is evil a problem for Christian theology? What does it call into question?

What are the two general types of evil discussed? How are they addressed by different possible solutions?

What are the different general forms that the problem of evil takes? Why is it important to notice which form the problem takes and to address it appropriately?

Define “Theodicy” in your own words. How is theodicy related to the problem of evil?

What are three solutions to the problem of evil? In general, what does each solution deny in order to solve the problem?

What are Erickson’s theological presuppositions that he brings to this discussion?

According to Erickson, how does human freedom affect the problem of evil? What Scripture proof does Erickson offer to commend this argument? Do you agree? Why or why not?

How would you define the terms “good” and “evil”? What are the three considerations Erickson suggests for defining good and evil? What is the starting point for definition that Erickson suggests?

How do general and specific sins affect evil?

Define “racial sin” in your own words. How does this contribute to Erickson’s definition and argument? What is the result of racial sin?

How can specific sins result in specific evils? How does this explain the problem of evil? Does this give a solution to the problem in general, or only certain cases?

How does God as the victim of evil impact the problem of evil? What correction does it give to the debate?

What does the future life contribute to the discussion on the problem of evil? What problem does it solve?