

Intro to Christian Theology

Syllabus & Course Notes

Keith Johnson, Ph.D.



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Organizational Purpose

The Institute of Biblical Studies (IBS) exists to help develop Christ-centered missionaries who possess the biblical and theological competencies they need (head, heart and hands) to live out the Great Commandment and helpfully fulfill the Great Commission through the ministry of Cru. This course explores twenty Christian doctrines that are foundational to our life and mission.

Course Description

Good theology is vital to the life and health of the church. Theology helps us answer questions like, ‘What is God like?’ ‘How does God speak to us?’ ‘Why did God create the world?’ ‘What does it mean to be human?’ ‘What’s wrong in the world?’ ‘Who is Jesus Christ and what did he do for us?’ ‘What is the good news of the gospel?’ ‘Who is the Holy Spirit?’ ‘What is a church?’ ‘How will God’s story end?’ This course will introduce you to the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith affirmed in the Cru Statement of Faith. Not only will you gain a deeper understanding of these doctrines, but you will also discover how these doctrines should practically shape our lives and ministries.

Learning Outcomes

1. Deepen your motivation to know, love and worship the triune God and to reflect God’s character as an image-bearer.
2. Gain greater confidence in Scripture as the inspired, inerrant, authoritative, sufficient and powerful Word of God.
3. Develop a deeper understanding of and commitment to the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith expressed in our Statement of Faith.
4. Become persuaded that Christian theology is not just about right beliefs (orthodoxy) but also right living (orthopraxy). You will be invited to explore the ethical implications of every doctrine we study.
5. Grow in your capacity to teach these foundational doctrines from Scripture and relate them to personal growth, evangelism, discipleship, movement-launching, cross-cultural mission.
6. Become more familiar with major viewpoints, differences, and conflicts which exist among Christians regarding key doctrines.
7. Grow in your awareness of the ways in which culture shapes our theologies as well as the importance of listening to believers in ethnic and cultural contexts different from our own.
8. Be better prepared to partner with those who hold differing theological views allowing for difference of opinion on matters not central to our Statement of Faith while pointing people to a compelling center (i.e., Christ, the gospel and our mission).
9. Develop a deeper understanding of and greater confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Required Texts

Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014). ISBN-13: 978-0801049330. Dr. Jones is associate professor of theology at Wheaton College. This book will introduce the key doctrines we'll be discussing in the class. [PCD]

David Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*, revised and updated (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2017). ISBN-13: 978-1414390383. Theology includes not merely what we believe but also how we live (ethics). Every doctrine we are exploring in this class has ethical implications. David Platt (Pastor of McLean Bible Church) relates the gospel to several ethical issues. [CC]

Additional Readings (Posted Online)

Gregg R Allison, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Life: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), chapter 49.

Thabiti Anyabwile, "An Apology to Beth Moore and My Sisters" (May 3, 2018).

Charles Octavius Boothe, *Plain Theology for Plain People* (Bellingham, W.A.: Lexham, 2017), intro and chapter 5.

Carl Ellis, Jr., "Biblical Righteousness Is a Four-Paned Window," The Gospel Coalition (August 22, 2018).

Jayson Georges, "Talking about Faith in Non-Western Contexts," *Modern Reformation* 27 (July 2017).

Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), chapters 1 and 8.

Keith E. Johnson, "Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?" (unpublished)

Beth Moore, "A Letter to My Brothers" (May 3rd, 2018).

Alan Scholes, "Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions," in *Principles of Leadership: What We Can Learn from the Life and Ministry of Bill Bright* (Orlando: New Life, 2001), chapter 24.

Byron Straughn, "Like Families and Soccer Teams: Church and Parachurch," *9Marks Journal* (March-April 2011).

Scott Swain, "Ten Things You Should Know about Systematic Theology" (Oct. 08, 2017).

You will also read several internal Cru documents outlining Cru's approach to several issues. These will be printed in your class notes.

Learning Tasks

- A. **Zoom Sessions (2 hrs daily plus two special seminars):** Class sessions will involve a mix of lecture and discussion (both with the whole class and in smaller groups). Just as you would arrive at class before the start time, be ready to go on your computer before class begins. Students are expected to actively engage, with their video on, in every class session. If you get sick and need to miss a class session, please let the TA know. We will try to record the session so you can watch it later. (Please note that if you miss more than 20% of the sessions, you cannot pass the class.)
- B. **Reading:** Given the compressed nature of this course, it will help if you can complete most the reading prior to the first session. Otherwise, you will be reading almost 50pp per night. Every year on the course evaluation, staff write “I wish I had completed the reading before I came to class.” As you read, you may find it helpful take notes on what you are reading. You will submit your reading report in Canvas. **DUE: Friday, June 25 by 11:59pm eastern time (submit to Canvas)**
- C. **Daily Journal:** Throughout the class, you will keep a journal where you record what you are learning and experiencing. Each day after class you will write a short journal entry (100-150 words) reflecting on how you felt about something you heard or discovered in class. It could be something that surprised you, something you found helpful or something that upset you. Consider the following questions: What was the most important thing you heard in today’s session? Why was it important? Was there anything you found challenging in today class? Why? Was there anything that made you feel uncomfortable or with which you disagreed? What is one way your future life and ministry might be impacted by what was discussed today? **Due after class each day by 11:59pm Eastern time (submit to Canvas)**
- D. **Reading Reflection:** You will pick two readings (chapter or article) that impacted you during the class and write about your experience with them. One reading must address Side A of theology (beliefs, e.g., Jones, Boothe, etc.) and one reading Side B (ethics, e.g., Platt, Ellis, Moore, etc.). What were the ideas from the chapter or article that connected with you? Why did you find them helpful? How did they challenge or encourage you? How do you want to apply them? Write 250 words for each reading. **DUE: Friday, June 25 by 11:59pm eastern time (submit to Canvas)**
- E. **Attributes of God Project:** This assignment is designed to help you grow in your ability to read Scripture theologically by exploring the attributes of God in Ephesians. You will find the worksheet posted in Canvas. **DUE: Monday, June 21 by the beginning of class (11:00am eastern time)**
- F. **Final Project – Case Studies:** You will write responses to a series of case studies similar to those we discussed throughout class. These case studies integrate the doctrines we are studying in this class with practical ministry situations. They will be posted in Canvas. You will NOT have access to them until the last day of class. **Due Monday, June 28 by 11:00am Eastern time (this is when BSM starts)**

Course Grade

In Cru, we talk about the five “E’s” of development: education, experience, exposure, environment and evaluation. Evaluation, the fifth E, plays an important role in our growth. Because this is a graduate level course, you will receive a letter grade.

Reading Report	20%
Reading Reflections	10%
Attributes Project	30%
Daily Journal	10%
Case Studies	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

Grading Scale

94-100	A
92-93	A-
90-91	B+
84-89	B
82-83	B-
80-81	C+
74-79	C
72-73	C-
65-71	D
0-65	F

Note: A grade of C- or better is required to apply this course toward your IBS requirements

Students with Learning Issues

If you have a learning issue that affects your participation in the class, please let the instructor or lead TA so we can help you as you engage with the learning tasks in the course.

Course Schedule and Assignments

Given the compressed nature of this course, it is important that you complete the majority the reading (especially Jones and Platt) prior to the first session. Readings are “due” the day they are assigned (i.e., readings for June 14 should be completed before class that day).

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Monday June 14 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Introduction to the Practice of Theology	González, <i>Mañana</i> , 21-30 [10pp online] “Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions,” [13pp, online] “Ten Things You Should Know about Systematic Theology” Swain [1p, online] PCD intro, [9pp]
	Convictions, Persuasions and Opinions	
Tuesday June 15 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	God Speaks: Revelation, Inspiration and Canon	PCD c2 [24pp] CC c9 [20pp] (Review instructions for Attributes Project)
	Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word	
Wednesday June 16 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	What is God Like?	PCD c3, c4 [42pp] (Begin work on Attributes Project - due Monday)
	Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit	
Thursday June 17 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Creation: God Made All Things	PCD c5 [20pp] González, <i>Mañana</i> , 117-23 [7pp online] “A Letter to My Brothers” [2pp online] “An Apology to Beth Moore and My Sisters” [2pp online] “Cru’s Theological Framework Oneness and Diversity” [1p lecture notes] – <i>this is being updated by Cru</i> “Sex and Gender: Cultural and Biblical Factors” [1p, lecture notes]
	Creation: Made in the Image of God	
Thursday June 17	“Cru's Heart for Oneness, Diversity and Biblical Justice” Special Seminar with Darryl and Gwen Smith 7:00-8:00pm eastern	

Course Schedule and Assignments (continued)

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Friday June 18 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Who is Jesus Christ?	PCD c6 [24pp] PCD c7 [25pp] “Reflections on the Incarnation” [2pp, lecture notes]
	What did Jesus do to save us?	
Monday June 21 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Who is the Holy Spirit?	**Attributes Project Due PCD c8 [25pp] Ellis “Biblical Righteousness is a Four-Paned Window” [2pp, online] CC c5 [24pp]
	Baptism and Filling with the Holy Spirit	
Tuesday June 22 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	The Fall: Corruption of Humanity	CC c2 [34pp] “Leading in a Complex Moral Environment” [15pp, lecture notes] Watch “Dear Church: I’m Gay” online
	Election: God Chose Us	
Tuesday June 22	“Navigating LGBT+ Questions” Special Seminar with Rachel Gilson 3:30-4:30pm Eastern time	
Wednesday June 23 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	The Gospel Call	“Gifts Flowing from the Grace of God,” <i>Plain Theology for Plain People</i> , Boothe [20pp, online] “Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?” Johnson [11pp, online] “Talking about Faith in Non-Western Contexts” Georges [2pp, online]
	Coming to Faith: Regeneration, Conversion and Justification	

Course Schedule and Assignments (continued)

Date	Topic	Reading Due
Thursday June 24 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	Assurance, Growth, Perseverance	PCD c9 [20pp] CC c3 [22pp] “Understanding the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate” [3pp, lecture notes]
	What is the Church?	“Men and Women in Ministry Together” [4pp, lecture notes] “Ten Connections between Jesus and the Kingdom” [1p, online]
Friday June 25 1:00-3:00pm Eastern time	How does Cru relate to the Church?	“Like Families and Soccer Teams” Straughn [9pp, online] “Missionary Rights and Responsibilities” [7pp, lecture notes] PCD c10 [22pp]
	How Will God’s Story End?	Allison, “Eternal Punishment” [8pp online] ** Reading Report Due **Reading Response Due
Monday June 28		**Case Studies Due 11:00am eastern

Submitting your Reading Report

To determine the percentage of reading you completed, divide the number of pages you completed by the total number of required pages and convert to a percentage. Example: Joe staff completed 300 pages of required reading. $300 \div 433 = 0.68 \times 100 = 68\%$. You will submit your reading report electronically in Canvas.

Total Reading = 433pp

Intro to the Practice of Theology

I. Introduction

Step 1: List three ministry activities you have been involved with this year in the first column below (either in Cru or your church). Try to be specific (e.g, I was discipling Bob).

Step 2: What role did “theology” play in each of these activities? For example, how did you use theology in each of these activities? What theological beliefs/assumptions informed (or could have informed) these activities? Fill in the chart below.

Ministry Activity	Role of Theology

II. Why Do We as Cru Missionaries Need to Learn about Theology?

III. What is “Theology”?

A. How would you describe, in your own words, what “theology” is?

B. Theology is the study of