

Part I — Introduction

Three questions need to be answered in order to help us have an initial understanding of Systematic Theology.

1. _____ is systematic theology?
2. _____ study it?
3. _____ are we to study it?

What Is Systematic Theology?

Definitions from well-known theologians

Charles Hodge (a preeminent American theologian from the 19th Century)

“Theology is the exhibition of the facts of _____ in their proper _____ and relation, with the principles or general truths which pervade and _____ the facts themselves.”

Millard Erickson (a contemporary American evangelical theologian)

“Theology in a Christian context is a discipline of study that seeks to understand the _____ revealed in the _____ and to provide a Christian understanding of reality . . . [that helps] lead to a _____ whole.”

Robert Reymond (a contemporary American reformed theologian)

“ . . . systematic theology is that methodological study of the _____ that views the Holy Scriptures as a completed revelation, seeks to understand _____ the plan, purpose, and didactic intention of the divine mind revealed in Holy Scripture.”, and to arrange that plan, purpose, and didactic intention in orderly _____ fashion as articles of the Christian faith.”

Wayne Grudem (writer of our textbook)

“Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us _____?’ about any given _____.”

“This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings _____ so that we know what to believe about each topic.”

Features Held in Common in these Definitions Central Aspects of Systematic Theology

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Wayne Grudem's definition contains a distinct characterization of ST:

He comments on this aspect as follows:

Grudem writes, "Systematic theology focuses on summarizing each doctrine as it should be understood by _____ Christians. This will sometimes involve the use of terms and even concepts that were not themselves used by any individual biblical author, but that are the proper result of combining the teachings of two or more biblical authors on a particular subject." (i.e. Trinity, incarnation, deity)

"[Today] implies the _____ to life as a necessary part of the proper pursuit of systematic theology. Thus, a doctrine under consideration is seen in terms of its _____ value for living the Christian life."

ST should not be seen as an abstract intellectual exercise. In its right place it is _____.

Systematic Theology: Why Study It?

1. To _____ Jesus. (Matthew 28:18-20)
2. To overcome sinful _____.
3. To _____ as a Christ follower.
(Colossians 1:9-10; 1 Tim 4:6; 6:3)
4. Forces us to deal with the _____.
5. Requires us to confront _____ issues.

How should we study systematic theology?

1. With _____ (Ps 119:18; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 1:17-19; Ps 1:2)
2. With _____ (Ezra 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:15)
3. With _____ (1Pet 5:5; James 1:19-20; 3:13, 17-18 1 Cor 8:1)
4. With _____ (Isaiah 55:8-9; Psalm 139:6; Romans 11:33-34)
5. With _____ (Acts 17:1; 1 Cor 12:28)
6. With _____ (Dt 6:5-6; Ps 139:17; Rom 11:33-36)

Urgent Need

“I am convinced that there is an urgent need in the church today for much greater understanding of Christian doctrine or systematic theology. Not only pastors and teachers need to understand theology in greater depth---the whole church does as well. One day by God’s grace, we may have churches full of Christians who can discuss, apply, and live the doctrinal teachings of the Bible as readily as they can discuss the details of their own jobs or hobbies---or the fortunes of their favorite sports team or television program. It is not that Christians lack the ability to understand doctrine; it is just that they must have access to it in an understandable form. Once that happens I think that many Christians will find that understanding (and living) the doctrines of Scripture is one of their greatest joys.” (Grudem, 18)

Personal Application

1. How has this introduction changed your understanding of and attitude toward ST?
2. What is likely to happen to a church that gives up learning ST?
3. On what elements of how to study ST do you need to focus?
4. Would you commit to personal prayer that God would make this study a time of spiritual growth and deeper fellowship with God?

Memory Verse

I have stored up your word
in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:11, ESV

*Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.*

Psalm 119:11, NASB

**Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.**

Psalm 119:11, KJV