

Doctrinal Reflection

Fitting my passage within systematic theology

Ephesians Workshop, Week 4, 3/1/2020

OVERVIEW OF THE INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY PROCESS

OBSERVATION – what do I see?

- STEP 1: Mark up the passage**
- STEP 2: Write out observations for each verse**
- STEP 3: Research setting and context**
- STEP 4: Write out questions for interpretation**

INTERPRETATION – what does it mean?

- STEP 1: Answer your questions for interpretation**
- STEP 2: Theological reflection (today)**
- STEP 3: Summarize the passage**
- STEP 4: Create a BIG idea**
- STEP 5: Come up with timeless truths based on your interpretation**

APPLICATION – how will I respond?

- STEP 1: Reflect – Pray and meditate over timeless truths, what stands out?**
- STEP 2: Respond – Come up with an action step**
- STEP 3: Recruit – get encouragement and accountability**

INTERPRETATION – what does it mean?

STEP 2: Theological reflection - studying with sound doctrine

- **Biblical Theological Reflection** – Relating my passage to biblical theology.
 - How does this passage relate to the entire story of Scripture?
 - How does it anticipate or reflect upon the person and work of Christ?
- **Doctrinal Reflection** – Relating my passage to systematic theology.
 - How does this passage fit into what the entire Bible says about a particular topic?
 - How does it sync in with the major topics and concerns of the Bible in systematic order?

“Theological reflection is a rigorous and prayerful discipline of taking the time to meditate on my text and how it relates to God’s plan of redemption. It is an exercise that asks how my passage relates to the Bible as a whole, especially to the saving acts of God in Jesus.”

David Helm, *Expositional Preaching*

Doctrinal Reflection – the what, why, and how

DOCTRINAL REFLECTION – what?

What is theological reflection on doctrine? How does it relate to biblical theology?

“If biblical theology helps you discern the progressive unfolding of God’s redemptive plan in Christ, then systematic theology helps you synthesize everything that the Bible says in the form of doctrines.”¹

“Systematic theology begins with key topics (God, man, sin, Christ, salvation, etc.) and then searches the Scriptures to see what they teach about them. On the other hand, biblical theology attempts to read the whole story of the Bible and asks how each part relates to the whole.”²

“Because Scripture faithfully represents the mind of God, the teaching of Scripture can be put together into a coherent whole. We can sum up what Scripture as a whole says about its central concerns, such as the character of God, the state of creation, the nature and fallenness of man, the saving work of Christ, the life of the church, and the promise of the world to come. Working through these topics in an orderly progression is called systematic theology.”³

Systematic Theology: “A way of reading the Bible that summarizes and synthesizes the teachings of Scripture and brings them to bear on our lives.”⁴

Biblical Theology: “A way of reading the Bible as one story by one divine author that culminates in who Jesus Christ is and what he has done, so that every part of Scripture is understood in relation to him.”⁵

¹ David Helm, *Expositional Preaching*, 83.

² Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 26.

³ Bobby Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine*, 38.

⁴ Jamieson, 38.

⁵ Roark and Cline, 26.

****Think of putting *together a puzzle* (Biblical theology in Bible study). Systematic theology, doctrinal reflection, is like going *bowling*, serves as the guardrails toward the pins, goal.**

DOCTRINAL REFLECTION – why?

Why is doctrinal reflection important? (2 Group Questions)

Why take time to consider Bible doctrine when studying a passage? What are the benefits to connecting a topic in my passage with the systematic whole of what Scripture says about it?

- Keeps me from error, puts it in perspective, keeps me from heresies, grounded.
- Helps me decide its importance in the scheme of what is important in the Bible.
- Helps me explain it to others. Helps answer questions. Even non-believers.
- If in a certain genre, it helps me balance, connect it with whole Bible teaching.
- Helps when two passages seemingly contradict.
- Gives me categories, language in which to live.
- Helps inform and explain my life.
- Helps me obey the Lord.
- Sets my worldview.
- Helps me teach my kids their worldview (catechism).
- Gives me the ability to defend good truth.

How can people get off into the gutter? How can things go awry if we don't do good doctrinal reflection? Do you have any examples of from your life?

- The devil twists the truth – we must have the whole story of truth in mind.
- Making Scripture say anything I want (revisionist interpretations).
- Taking one or two verses by themselves and making an entire doctrine, ministry, and lifestyle around it. Or taking an unclear passage and doing the same.
- Prosperity gospel – In Africa they start a church around a belief to make money.
- New Christians are particularly vulnerable.

DOCTRINAL REFLECTION – how?

How do you do doctrinal reflection when studying the Bible? What is your process? What resources do you use?

- Find everywhere it is in the Bible. Make a list. Summarize. Then check systematic theology books.
- A yearly diet of reading – sermons, commentaries, a systematic theology, etc.
- Biographies such as *Servants of Joy* can help round out and reinforce theology.

My Process

1. Make observations, summarize. Ask **questions**.
 - Eph 2:11-22, esp. 19-22
2. Try to connect it to the topic **according to the book** I am in.
 - Ephesians, list the places I see the topic in the particular book (Unity)
3. Try to connect it with what the **author** says as a whole about it or other important passages about that topic by the author.
 - What else Paul says about it.
4. Try to fit it into what the entire **NT or OT says**.
 - What is the church, people of God in OT and NT
5. **Fit it into the major topics and sub-categories** of systematic theology. Pull out a resource and review it, find where it may be. Learn the different views. Find the main texts that explain it well. Look at the history of the particular doctrine – historic confessions.
 - Body: church metaphors sections - Spiritual gifts section: purposes of the church
6. Decide **how important or formative** the topic is in your passage. (major, minor, need more passages for further explanations) i.e.
 - Ephesians 2 & 4, unity of the church passages are important, formative.
7. How much of **this will I include** in my talk, sermon, or how much does it relate to the main point of the passage?

Lets Try it!

Practice doctrinal reflection on our passage today, Ephesians 4:25-5:2. 4:27, “And give no opportunity to the devil.” Here are some related topics to get us started. Angelology, spiritual warfare. Angels, Demons, the Devil. The Devil’s influence, spiritual warfare in the life of a believer.

- Our passage today (summarize)
- In Ephesians - you could also break it down according to chapters or according to the two halves of the book

- In Paul's writings
- In the New Testament
- In the Entire Bible
- What reference books/resources would you use? How would they help?
- How does it fit within the major topics and sub-categories of systematic theology?
- How important or formative is the topic in your passage as it relates to the topic as a whole in Scripture?
- How much of this will I include in my talk, sermon, or how much does it relate to the main point of the passage?

Resources

- Study Bibles - *ESV Systematic Theology Study Bible*, *ESV Study Bible*.
- A systematic theology – *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem, *Christian Theology* by Millard Erickson.
- *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith* by Gregg Allison
- *Basic Bible Texts* by John Jefferson Davis