

Syllabus for the Course

Bible Doctrines

DIBS

Tailor-made Biblical education for every believer

BIBLE DOCTRINES

General Course Description

The course *Bible Doctrines* is a survey of Bible doctrines that deductively shows the student what conservative evangelicals believe the Bible says and why. At the end of the course, the student will have a solid grasp of the major points of theology. This course is worth 8 credit hours and is part of the Bible Certificate program. The estimated number of study hours to complete the course is 320 hours.

Course Objectives

The objectives for this course of Bible Doctrines are as follows:

- ◆ The student will be able to explain in general terms what each major point of Bible doctrines is, what at least one standard evangelical view of each point is, and what his own position is.
- ◆ The student will be able to show that he has familiarized himself with some of the theologically conservative books on selected issues of Bible doctrines, and will be able to give his own opinion on the issues.
- ◆ The student will be able to demonstrate that he has a foundational structure for understanding the message of the Bible. (This foundation will facilitate his study of the Bible and of other courses, since it will give him greater insight into “where the Bible is headed” when it is talking about a given subject.)

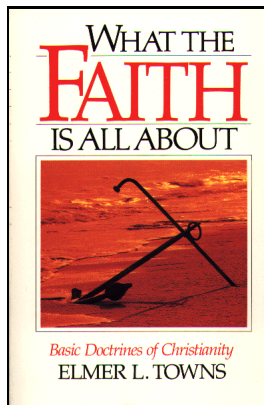
Course Procedures

General survey of Bible doctrines

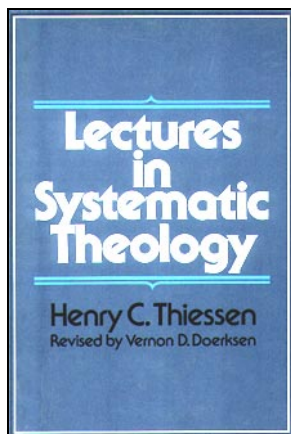
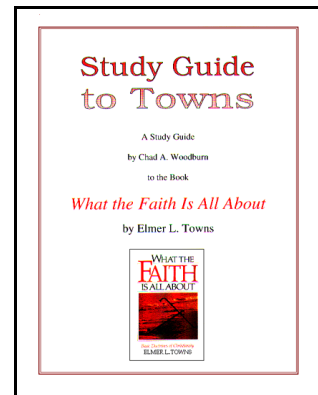
The student will study a book on Bible doctrines at the general introductory level along with a study guide to that book. While he is doing this, he is to take notes of his study. At a minimum, these notes should include 1) any questions the student had about what the text says, and the answers he found, and 2) any comments or insights the student has that he wants to remember. If the student has come to a conclusion that differs significantly from that of either the author of the book or of the study guide, he should give a short statement and explanation of his difference.

The student is encouraged to let his own spiritual gifts, abilities, and creativity show in these notes. For example, some students will especially emphasize analytical notes (critiquing what is said), others will point out the practical application of the doctrines, and others will show how to present this Biblical information to others. One of the best ways to take notes is to write the notes with a view to tutoring others in the subject: What would you want to get across to them? What makes this point of doctrine significant to you? Focus in on these questions, and your notes will be very valuable and will reflect your personality and spiritual gifts.

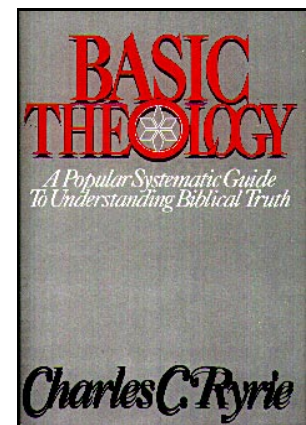
These notes must be typed and be suitable for presenting to others. The student is to turn in two copies of these notes to his director at DIBS. These notes will then be available for others to use.



The text for this study is *What the Bible Is All About* by Elmer Towns along with *Study Guide to Towns* by Chad A. Woodburn. These two publications are available through DIBS. While Towns' book is by no means the best, it is one of the most readable, is easy to understand, and presents standard evangelical beliefs at the level typically heard in churches. This gives us the opportunity to examine analytically commonly heard views. The study guide greatly enhances the value of Towns' book.



In conjunction with his study of Towns' book, the student is also to carefully read *Lectures in Systematic Theology* by Henry C. Thiessen and *Basic Theology* by Charles C. Ryrie. As the student reads these books, he is to take notes on the words he did not know in the texts (noting their meaning and pronunciation, if it is not clear), any points that were not clear to him (and the answers he found), and any other kinds of observations he may have (especially his own analysis of the books). The student should try to



read the chapters in Thiessen and Ryrie that correspond to the topic he is studying in Towns at the same time.

Collateral reading of Bible doctrines

How much reading. The student is to read books in various areas of Bible doctrines equaling a total of 120 book hours (which are explained below). This is for the purpose of familiarizing the student with some of the literature on the subject and broadening his understanding of specific subjects. This might seem like a lot of reading, however the student should remember that there are no lectures in the DIBS program.

Records and reports. In addition to reading the books, the student has the following two responsibilities. (1) He is to keep a reading log, noting the following:

- what he has read,
- when he read each book (starting date and ending date),
- how many book hours each book is worth ("book hours" are explained below),
- and approximately how long it took him to read each book.

This log will probably be no longer than one page for all the books he reads. This log is to be turned in at the end of the course. Naturally, if the student wishes to take notes on his reading, he is encouraged to

do so, but is not required to. (2) He is to write a brief review of each book. Items to address in the review might include the following:

- what the book is about,
- how the author approached the subject (from what viewpoint and to what audience),
- the student's evaluation of the book.

This report is to be typewritten and preferably just one page long (learning to be concise is a virtue). These reports are to be turned in at the end of the course with the reading log.

Which books. In the absence of any direction from his teacher, the student may select which books he wishes to read, so long as the following points are observed:

- they are books on Bible doctrines,
- they are written from a conservative viewpoint; no liberal or non-evangelical books),
- and no more than any three books are on the same topic of theology.

The student should check with his study director first to see whether he has any books which he wants the student to include in his reading. The books he may require will not equal more than half of the book-hour requirement, so the student will still have a lot of personal choices to make. If the study director requires certain books, he may also require that they be read along with study guides. The student may include reading selections from theological journals, but these do not count in the limit of two books per topic.

Book hours. To calculate the "book hours" for a book, the student is to multiply the number of words per page (of a normal, full page) times the number of pages of text (from the first page of reading to the last page of reading; don't worry about subtracting blank or partial pages). This product is then divided by 12,000 — that is, 200 (the number of words per minute for the average person who surveys, reads, and reviews) times 60 (the number of minutes per hour). This number can then be rounded to the nearest tenth of an hour (or, if you are converting it to hours and minutes, to the nearest 5 minutes). This standard for book hours is based on well established norms for reading speed and study.¹

¹ **The average study-reading speed.** The average reading speed for college students is 250 words per minute (WPM). It has been found that, to get the most out of reading (in terms of understanding and retention) in the least amount of time, a mix of four parts reading and one part surveying and reviewing is best. That means that a studying speed of 200 WPM will give the optimal results for the average student. If you read more slowly than that, then you need to work at your reading skills. After all, you can probably quote your favorite Bible verse out loud at a rate of over 300 WPM.

Finding your ideal study-reading speed. Most students have underdeveloped reading skills. One good way to find out what your current ideal reading speed is, is to do the following. Take a fairly short passage (one with about 500 words or so) and practice reading it over and over until you can read it smoothly and quickly. Time yourself on each reading. When you notice that your reading speed is no longer improving, you have reached your current maximum speed. Now, divide the number of words in the passage by the number of minutes it took you to read it. That is your maximum WPM. However, for prolonged reading of new material, you should not expect to go faster than about 80% of this speed. So, multiply your maximum WPM by .8 to get your average reading speed. Also, since you should have a mix of four parts reading to one part of reviewing, your average studying speed should be only 80% of your average reading speed. So, multiply your average reading speed by .8 to find your average studying speed for reading. So, if your maximum reading speed were 500 WPM, then your average reading speed would be around 400 WPM, and your ideal average studying speed (or study-reading speed) would be around 320

To find the book hours of a book, do the following:

1. Count the number of words in a normal, full page of text.
2. Find the number of pages of text in the book.
3. Multiply the number of pages of text by the words per page to find the number of words in the book.
4. Divide the number of words in the book by 12,000.
5. Round off the answer to the nearest tenth. The result is the number of book hours that a book is worth.

This system of assigning book hours is superior to just assigning so many actual hours of reading or so many pages or books. This is true, first, because some students will read much more slowly than 200 words per minute, while others will possibly read twice as fast. Also, books vary greatly in the number of pages they have and in the number of words they have per page. This system of calculating book hours has the value of getting everyone to read the same amount of text. Calculations of book hours will vary slightly depending on how many words per page you count a book as having, and how many pages of text you count. Don't worry about it or spend more than a few minutes per book trying to calculate its number of book hours.

To read 120 book hours on doctrinal themes, the student will probably have to read between 10 to 20 books. For example, Pink's *The Sovereignty of God* is worth about 5.5 book hours, Ryrie's *What You Should Know About the Rapture* is barely 3.0 book hours, and Robert Saucy's *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* weighs in at 14.9 book hours.

Final projects of Bible doctrines

The "final exam" is really two projects. In the first project, the student will write out a brief doctrinal statement on each of the major points of Bible doctrines. On each point the student is to state succinctly what he believes with Biblical support and give enough information to identify clearly where

WPM. The "book hours" used by DIBS are based on a maximum reading speed of about 312 WPM, an average reading speed of 250 WPM, and an average studying speed of 200 WPM.

The upper limit for reading speeds. While many students read too slowly, a few claim reading speeds that are extremely high. Many students who cannot read that fast become discouraged and think something is wrong with them. However, scientists have shown that the eye can only make a limited number of fixations per second and that the eye can only distinguish a limited number of characters on each side of the focal point in each fixation. These two factors set the theoretical upper limit on the maximum reading speed (somewhere around 600 WPM). Those who claim to read much faster than this either have specially gifted eyes that can make more fixations per second than has been observed scientifically or—which is more likely—they are doing some very skillful skimming. There are, no doubt, many who will vehemently denounce this view. But it should be remembered that the point is not to depreciate or argue with the reading skills of those who are very gifted, but to encourage those who are not so gifted to not feel that something is wrong with them. When a student finds his own maximum reading speed, he should evaluate his normal reading speed against that, not against the ads of professional speed-reading instructors.

he stands on each point. Something like one-half of a type-written page per major point should be adequate.

In the second project, the student is to take one point of doctrine and write a paper on it as if it were being presented as a sermon or a Bible class.

The student is to have at least two other people critique both of his papers for content, format, and presentation. He should make sure that he selects people who will actually analyze and critique his paper, not those who will just say, "I liked it." The student is then to make any corrections to the papers he thinks are needed.

The student is then to turn in his two papers, his study notes on his reading, his collateral reading log, and his book reviews. If any of the work does not come up to the standards required by DIBS, it will be sent back to the student, and he will have to correct it accordingly.

Special Situations

Students wanting to tutor other students

If, once he has finished this course, a student wants to tutor others in it (in such a way that they would receive credit from DIBS), he is expected to make up a study guide of some kind to help other students. The student should use his own creativity and spiritual gifts in designing this study guide. He may choose to make a study guide on one of the books he reads similar to Woodburn's guide to *What the Faith Is All About*. Or he may wish to use a totally different approach. This study guide must be typed and be suitable for presenting to others. The student is to turn in a copy of these notes to his director at DIBS. These notes will then be available for others to use.

Students wishing to validate previous study

If a student has previously done some or all of the work required for this course, he may validate that work. This will require much less work than taking the course in its entirety, but he will still need to do some work in order to verify that he has met the course objectives and to fill in any gaps in his study.

Validating the reading of the required texts. To validate the reading under "*General survey of Bible doctrines*," the student will need to show that he has done an amount of reading from similar books equal to the reading required in that section. The book hours for the "required" books is as follows:

Towns, <i>What the Faith Is All About</i>	15.0 book hours
Woodburn, <i>Study Guide to Towns</i>	2.6 book hours
Ryrie, <i>Basic Theology</i>	24.3 book hours
Thiessen, <i>Lectures in Systematic Theology</i>	15.5 book hours
Total book hours	57.4 book hours

If the student has not taken notes on the reading he wishes to validate, he will have to read the book by Towns and the study guide for it and take the required notes for them.

Validating the collateral reading. To validate the collateral reading, the student merely needs to provide a reading log which reconstructs, to the best of his knowledge, his previous reading of books that meet the criteria for collateral reading. He will also have to write and turn in the book reviews that are required.

Doing the final projects. When the student has completed all the required reading, he will then have to do the final project and turn in his work.

Degree completion students

If a student is doing this course as part of a degree completion program, he will be required to produce a study guide or guides as outlined above, under *Students wanting to tutor other students*. The study guide(s) should cover at least 12 book hours. Those in the Master's or Doctoral degree completion programs will have additional requirements and be required to fulfill them at an academic level in keeping with the degree they are seeking.

Receiving Credit for the Course

When a student has finished his course work and turned it in for his study director's evaluation, his study director will review it. The study director may return it to the student for corrections or additional work to bring it up to the standards expected by DIBS. If this study director is someone outside of DIBS, then once he is satisfied with the work, he will send it to DIBS with his recommendation for approval.

If DIBS determines that the student's work still needs additional work, it will be sent back to the student so he may bring it up to the standards of DIBS.

Once DIBS determines that the student's work is satisfactory, the student will be sent a certificate showing that he has completed the course and received credit with DIBS for it.



Notice of right to change course requirements

DIBS reserves the right to interpret or change these course requirements as it deems necessary in order to maintain its academic excellence, Biblical faithfulness, and practical value for the students.

Finding the required texts

The following prices are those as of 9/96. Towns' book is currently out of print, however it will be reprinted by another publisher. Until then, copies may be obtained from DIBS.

Book's author	Obtainable from	Catalog #	Retail cost	Selling price
Towns	DIBS			\$16.45
Woodburn	DIBS			\$11.00
Thiessen	CBD	#3529	\$25.00	\$17.95
Ryrie	CBD	#62814	\$26.99	\$18.95

To order from DIBS, send a check for the amount of the two books plus \$4.00 for shipping and handling (Florida residents must add \$1.92 for tax) to the following address:

DIBS
3870 Blackberry Circle
St. Cloud, Florida 34769

To order from CBD, call 1-508-977-5000. They will also charge you for shipping and handling, with rates of around either \$4.00 for standard service, \$6.00 for one week service, or \$11.00 for two-day air service.