

# Building Systematic Theology

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## Student Syllabus

ACADEMIC  
PACKET

RESOURCES FOR GROUPS  
USING THE ACADEMIC PACKETS



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#### **ABOUT THIRD MILLENNIUM MINISTRIES**

Founded in 1997, Third Millennium Ministries is a non-profit Evangelical Christian ministry dedicated to providing:

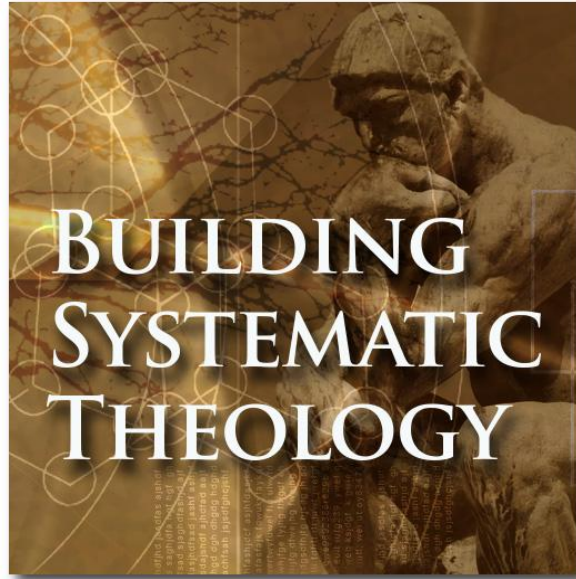
#### **Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.**

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

In order to accomplish our distribution goals, Third Millennium has forged strategic partnerships with churches, seminaries, Bible schools, missionaries, Christian broadcasters and satellite television providers, and other organizations. These relationships have already resulted in the distribution of countless video lessons to indigenous leaders, pastors, and seminary students. Our websites also serve as avenues of distribution and provide additional materials to supplement our lessons, including materials on how to start your own learning community.

Third Millennium Ministries is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation. We depend on the generous, tax-deductible contributions of churches, foundations, businesses, and individuals. For more information about our ministry, and to learn how you can get involved, please visit [www.thirdmill.org](http://www.thirdmill.org).



## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Throughout the history of the church, faithful Christians have used systematic theology to communicate the teachings of our faith. For many, it has proven to be a helpful tool for expressing ideas clearly, and for organizing them in ways that increase our understanding of Scripture. This course analyzes the steps of building systematic theology, especially the formation of technical terms, theological propositions, and doctrinal statements. It examines the legitimacy of systematic theology, the place of human logic in the process, and the dangers and benefits of this tool. This course is based on the lecture series, [Building Systematic Theology](#), produced by Third Millennium Ministries and presented by Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

## **RICHARD L. PRATT, JR.**

Dr. Pratt L. Pratt, Jr., is the president and founder of Third Millennium Ministries. He received his M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary and his Th.D. in Old Testament Studies from Harvard University. He formerly chaired the Old Testament department at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. Pratt transitioned in 2006 from his teaching role at RTS to work full time with Third Millennium Ministries. Among his published books are: *Every Thought Captive*, *Pray With Your Eyes Open*, *He Gave Us Stories*, and *Designed For Dignity*.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **GOALS**

In this course, we would like to accomplish the following:

1. We hope you will develop a greater appreciation for systematic theology, and that you will become aware of its benefits and dangers.

2. We hope you will understand the process of developing systematic theology, including the proper use of human logic, the proper use of the Scriptures, and the proper method of defining technical terms, making theological propositions, and designing doctrinal statements.

3. We hope you make changes in your life as a response to the teachings of this course. It should change the way you use systematic theology and help you analyze contemporary theological expressions.

## OBJECTIVES

When you have done the following, it will show that the goals are met:

1. Obtain satisfactory grades on the tests and final exam, demonstrating that you can do the following: a) explain the process of developing systematic theology, b) define some key terms of systematic theology, c) identify the proper use of logic in the process of systematic theology, d) identify the proper use of the Scriptures in the process of systematic theology, and e) identify the benefits and dangers of systematic theology.

2. Answer the application questions of the study guides, in which you express your own thoughts and attitudes regarding systematic theology, and show how you have applied the teachings of the course to your own life.

## THE FACILITATOR

This course is designed to be studied in a group with a facilitator, supervisor, or mentor. If you do not have a facilitator, you may wish to speak with your pastor or some spiritual leader in your church. The facilitator should read the "General Guidelines for Facilitators".

## OTHER MATERIALS

Besides this syllabus, there are other resources you will need for this course. They should be available in the same place, or same folder, where you found this file. If not, talk to your facilitator.

## CREDIT

Third Millennium does not offer credit for their courses. However, the materials are offered freely to any institution that would like to use them. If the student would like to seek credit for the course, he needs to find an institution that will supervise his studies and give him credit. He should consult with them to see about their requirements and expectations.

## THEMATIC OUTLINE OF THE COURSE

1. What is Systematic Theology?
2. Technical Terms in Theology
3. Propositions in Systematics
4. Doctrines in Systematics

## GENERAL EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

The guidelines for assignments below are meant to be suggestions. Each group or academic institution may customize the course according to the needs of their students. For example, some may prefer to require the additional reading, while others may not. The same applies to the optional written project. Furthermore, some may prefer to meet once a week, while others prefer to meet more often or less

often. Some groups may prefer to restructure the assignments to fit a regular pattern of classes, possibly a period of eight weeks, for example.

Don't worry about the details now, since they will be given to you as you go through the assignments of each session, but in order for you to know what to plan for, the suggested assignments can be summarized as follows:

### **The Lectures**

1. Watch the video lectures (or listen to the audio, or read the text version).
2. Complete the study guides for each section of each lesson. This includes writing notes on the lesson while using the outline provided, answering the review questions, and answering the application questions.
3. Take the tests on each lesson. These will be administered in the classes. (For credit, they must be graded by the authorities of the academic institution where the student is seeking credit.)

### **Optional Additional Reading**

Read the additional reading. This may be done in two different ways, according to the agreement you have with the facilitator or academic institution. Option 1: Read the selected additional reading provided for this course, and take the test on it. Option 2: Read at least 300 pages of additional reading that you select from the list of "Recommended Extra Reading." In this case, you should turn in a written report on each book or article, using the "Form for reading reports." (For credit, these reports must be turned in for evaluation.)

### **Optional Written Project**

Write an 8-10 page project, following the instructions found below. (For credit, this must be turned in for evaluation.)

## **GRADES**

We recommend calculating the final grade as follows, depending on the option selected:

- a) Without the additional reading or written project:

Each test is 25%.

- b) Including the additional reading, but without the written project:

Each test is 20% (total: 80%).  
The additional reading is 20%.

- c) Including the written project, but without the additional reading:

Each test is 20% (total: 80%).  
The written project is 20%.

d) Including both the additional reading and the written project:

Each test is 15% (total: 60%)..  
The additional reading is 20%.  
The written project is 20%.

## **SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS FOR EACH SESSION**

These plans are only suggestions. Your facilitator may decide to modify them, as he talks things over with the group.

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### **INITIAL PLANNING MEETING**

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The first meeting is a brief orientation for the course. There is no homework before the first meeting. The student will receive the materials he needs and talk over plans for the course.

NOTE: If the group is studying a series of courses, we recommend that you take advantage of the last session of each course to make arrangements for the following course, thus avoiding unnecessary extra meetings.

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### **LESSON 1**

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Watch the first lesson in the video series from *Third Millennium*, "Building Systematic Theology" by Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr. (Be careful not to confuse this series with another series called "Building Your Theology.") The first lesson of this series is called "What is Theology?" We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the lesson.

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#### **SECTION 1**

1. Watch section 1 of the first video lesson, called "New Testament." (The video time is from the beginning to 26 minutes and 49 seconds, 00-26:49.)

Remember: You may also download the audio files for listening to the lecture, or you may also read the text version.

2. Use Study Guide 1.1 to help learn the contents of the first section of the lesson. Use the outline to take notes, answer the review questions, and answer the application questions.

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#### **SECTION 2**

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Historical Developments" (Video time: 26:50-1:15:21), using Study Guide 1.2.

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#### **SECTION 3**

1. Follow the same procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Values and Dangers" (Video time: 1:15:22-1:37:28), using Study Guide 1.3.

2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

NOTE: If you are going to do the additional reading, we recommend that you begin to do part of it now, to avoid reading a lot at the end of the course. See the assignments below.

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## **LESSON 2**

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Watch the second lesson of the video series, called "Technical Terms in Theology." We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the lesson.

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### **SECTION 1**

1. Watch section 1 of this second video lesson, called "Orientation" (00:34:11).
  2. Use Study Guide 2.1 to help learn the contents of the first section of the lesson. Use the outline to take notes, answer the review questions, and answer the application questions.
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### **SECTION 2**

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Formation" (34:12-57:03), using Study Guide 2.2.

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### **SECTION 3**

1. Repeat this procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Values and Dangers" (57:04-1:28:30), using Study Guide 2.3.
2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.



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**LESSON 3**

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Study the third lesson of the video series, called "Propositions in Systematics."

We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the video.

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**SECTION 1**

1. Watch section 1 of the third video lesson, called "Orientation" (00-29:03).
  2. Use Study Guide 3.1 to help learn the contents of the section.
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**SECTION 2**

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Formation" (29:04-1:00:19), using Study Guide 3.2.

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**SECTION 3**

1. Repeat this procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Values and Dangers" (1:00:20-1:26:24), using Study Guide 3.3.
2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

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## **LESSON 4**

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Study the fourth lesson of the video series, called "Doctrines in Systematics."

We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the video.

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### **SECTION 1**

1. Watch section 1 of the fourth video lesson, called "General Orientation" (00-33:19).
  2. Use Study Guide 4.1 to help learn the contents of the section.
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### **SECTION 2**

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Formation" (33:20-1:17:55), using Study Guide 4.2.

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### **SECTION 3**

1. Repeat this procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Values and Dangers" (1:17:56-1:44:20), using Study Guide 4.3.
2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

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## ADDITIONAL READING

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Option 1:

1. Read the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, using the study guide to help find the most important points.
2. Take the test in the next class on these readings.

Note: Some groups may prefer to require only portions of the above readings.

Option 2:

1. Read at least 300 pages of additional reading of your own choice, selecting from the list of "Recommended Extra Reading." Choose materials related to the topics of this course.
2. Fill out a separate written report on each book or article, using the "Form for Reading Reports."
3. Prepare to share what you are learning from your reading and *turn in your written reports*.

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## OPTIONAL WRITTEN PROJECT

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Some groups may require a written project. If so, we recommend an essay of 8-10 pages, using the following guidelines:

1. Read the "Guidelines for Writing an Essay."
2. Choose a topic related to the subjects studied in this course. You may choose from the following suggestions, or you may choose another topic that is of special interest to you, as long as it is related to the subjects covered in this course.
  - 1) The influence of Plato in systematic theology
  - 2) The influence of Aristotle in systematic theology
  - 3) The life and theology of Augustine
  - 4) The life and theology of Thomas Aquinas
  - 5) The life and theology of Martin Luther
  - 6) The life and theology of John Calvin
  - 7) Key differences between Catholic and Protestant theology
  - 8) What are the most common errors in doing systematic theology?
  - 9) What is the proper role of human reason in doing theology?
  - 10) How should we contextualize systematic theology for our unique time and culture?
  - 11) What main points are emphasized in the systematic theology within your church tradition?
3. For this session, you should do the research and planning for the essay. Think of questions that you want to answer in your essay and write them down. This will guide your research. You may find resources for your research by looking at the list of "Recommended Extra Reading."
4. Prepare an outline, with some notes about your ideas for the content.
5. Write a rough draft of the project.
  - a. Be very careful to follow the "Guidelines for Writing an Essay."
  - b. Make sure you include an introduction that stirs interest in the study.
  - c. Explain the questions that you are especially researching. In the main body, you should include possible answers to your questions that others offer, then give your own conclusions and back them up.
  - d. Include a conclusion, summarizing your answers.
  - e. Make sure to add footnotes where you have used ideas from another source (even if you do not quote the source directly), and include a bibliography at the end.
6. Finish the final version of the written project. Correct any grammatical errors or spelling mistakes. Read it aloud and make sure it is easy to understand. Polish it until it is publishable. *Be prepared to turn it in.*