

Can people experience God, or are all religious experiences psychological in nature and void of objective reality? And if real, do religious experiences “point to truth” or are they mere “pointers of truth”—do they reveal truth or confirm truth?

Story, D. (1998). Christianity on the Offense : Responding to the beliefs and assumptions of spiritual seekers (59)

Personal religious experiences are the sacred cows of numerous religions, the entire basis of their truth-claims. Most cults have as their source of truth the religious experiences of alleged prophets. Similarly, personal religious experiences are the guiding force in many New Age religions and the so-called “Word Faith Movement.” Even well-established religions such as Islam and Mormonism rely on religious experiences as their cornerstone of truth.

Story, D. (1998). Christianity on the Offense : Responding to the beliefs and assumptions of spiritual seekers (59)

It is undeniable that some religious experiences are real. They can't be brushed aside as mere psychological phenomenon, as some skeptics are prone to do.

Story, D. (1998). Christianity on the Offense : Responding to the beliefs and assumptions of spiritual seekers (60)

Christianity rests on a solid foundation of history and can be verified by all the canons of historical investigation. But our faith also touches the heart as well as the mind. Religious experiences that reflect a true encounter with the living God are a vital ingredient of Christianity.

Story, D. (1998). Christianity on the Offense : Responding to the beliefs and assumptions of spiritual seekers (61)

More than any other religion in the world, Christianity confirms its truth-claims through profound, life-changing religious experiences. Jesus' disciples set the example for countless millions of Christians to follow.

Story, D. (1998). Christianity on the Offense : Responding to the beliefs and assumptions of spiritual seekers (61)

Before Jesus was crucified, His followers abandoned Him, fled to their homes, and locked themselves inside from fear of the Jewish and Roman authorities (Matt. 26:56; John 20:19). Yet a few weeks later, these same men were boldly proclaiming the Christian message in the very city and before the very authorities who crucified Jesus.

Story, D. (1998). Christianity on the Offense : Responding to the beliefs and assumptions of spiritual seekers (61)

What caused this dramatic turnaround? What caused them to forfeit the comforts of life, their family and friends, and their traditional religious beliefs to embrace a religious movement that resulted in persecution and death? They encountered the living and risen Christ, and their lives were changed forever.

Story, D. (1998). Christianity on the Offense : Responding to the beliefs and assumptions of spiritual seekers (61)

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; **7** then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; **8** and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Biblical faith is about truth. God has described himself and his works to us in the language of the Bible, and it is quite presumptuous for us to say that we have found a better way to hear him (through our own experience) and a better way to find reality (by constructing it within the self).

Wells, No Place For Truth (184).

In a nutshell: Experience can confirm or illustrate our theology, but it cannot define or determine our theology.

(a) To what extent can a demon(s) affect a Christian?

*tempt?

*harass?

*influence?

*attach?

*inhabit?

*possess?

*all the above?

(b) What can be done to cancel or reverse the effects a demon(s) in a believer's life?

*resist?

*rebuke?

*repent?

*cast out the demon(s)?

*exorcise the demon(s)?

*all the above?

A related question that arose from (a)
&
(b) was:

(c) Can a demon's activity in a believer's life be so powerful that progress in sanctification is stalled until the demon is expelled, cast out, or exorcised?

*yes?

*no?

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Theology

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Theology

2Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Theology

“But the truth of the sufficiency of Scripture is of great significance for our Christian lives, for it enables us to focus our search for God’s words to us on the Bible alone and saves us from the endless task of searching through all the writings of Christians throughout history,

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Theology

or through all the teachings of the church, or through all the subjective feelings and impressions that come to our minds from day to day, in order to find what God requires of us.

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Theology

This doctrine means, moreover, that it is possible to collect all the passages that directly relate to doctrinal issues such as the atonement, or the person of Christ, or the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life today.

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Theology

In these and hundreds of other moral and doctrinal questions, the biblical teaching about the sufficiency of Scripture gives us confidence that we will be able to find what God requires us to think or to do in these areas.

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Theology

In many of these areas we can attain confidence that we, together with the vast majority of the church throughout history, have found and correctly formulated what God wants us to think or to do.” *Wayne Grudem*

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

“The rule of thumb in the Bible is
“The main things are the plain things,
and the plain things are the main
things.” This is called the
“perspicuity” (clarity) of Scripture. If
something is important, it is clearly
taught and probably in more than
one place.” *Norman Geisler*

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

“Then the third point I would make under this heading is that the doctrine must be plain and clear in the Scriptures. May I introduce you to a technical term. I am trying not to do this, but this is a great term—one that was used by our Protestant fathers.

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

They talked about the perspicuity of the scriptural doctrine, by which they meant that true scriptural doctrine is always plain and clear. Scripture itself emphasizes that everywhere. It presumes it.

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

We often make a great mistake when we come to study the Scriptures because we do not stop to remind ourselves of the type of people for whom they were written.

The Perspicuity of Scripture in

Theology

It would have saved a lot of ink and a lot of trouble if everybody who became an expositor of St Paul's epistles had reminded himself, before he started expounding, that the epistles were not written to students or to professors of doctrine at Oxford and Cambridge, but to slaves, and to common, ordinary people!

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

When St Paul wrote these epistles he took it for granted that the people to whom he was writing would understand them. They did not have these learned professors to expound them. No, no.

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

He was writing to them that he might teach them, and he knew that they would understand. This is what the fathers meant by the perspicuity of the Scriptures.” *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

“The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people. And they have the right, and are bound to read and interpret it for themselves; so that their faith may rest on the testimony of the Scriptures, and not on that of the Church. Such is the doctrine of Protestants on this subject.” *Charles Hodge*

The Perspicuity of Scripture in Theology

“We can affirm that the Bible is written in such a way that all things necessary for our salvation and for our Christian life and growth are very clearly set forth in Scripture.” *Wayne Grudem*

The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

1. Scripture: We start with Scripture; the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Special revelation must take precedence over general revelation.

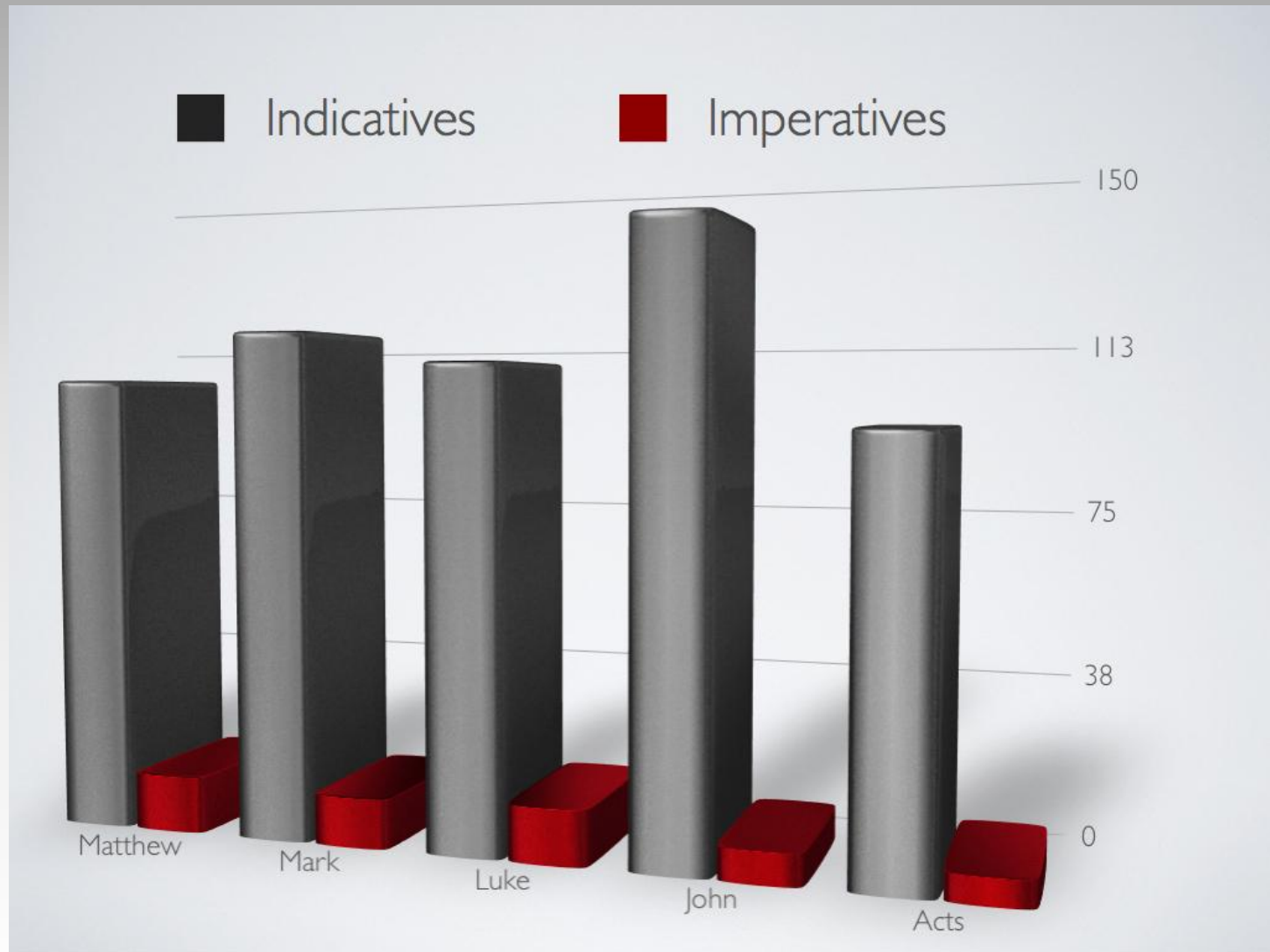
The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

1. Scripture: We don't start theology with our experiences which are subjective. We start with the objective, infallible, immutable Word of God.

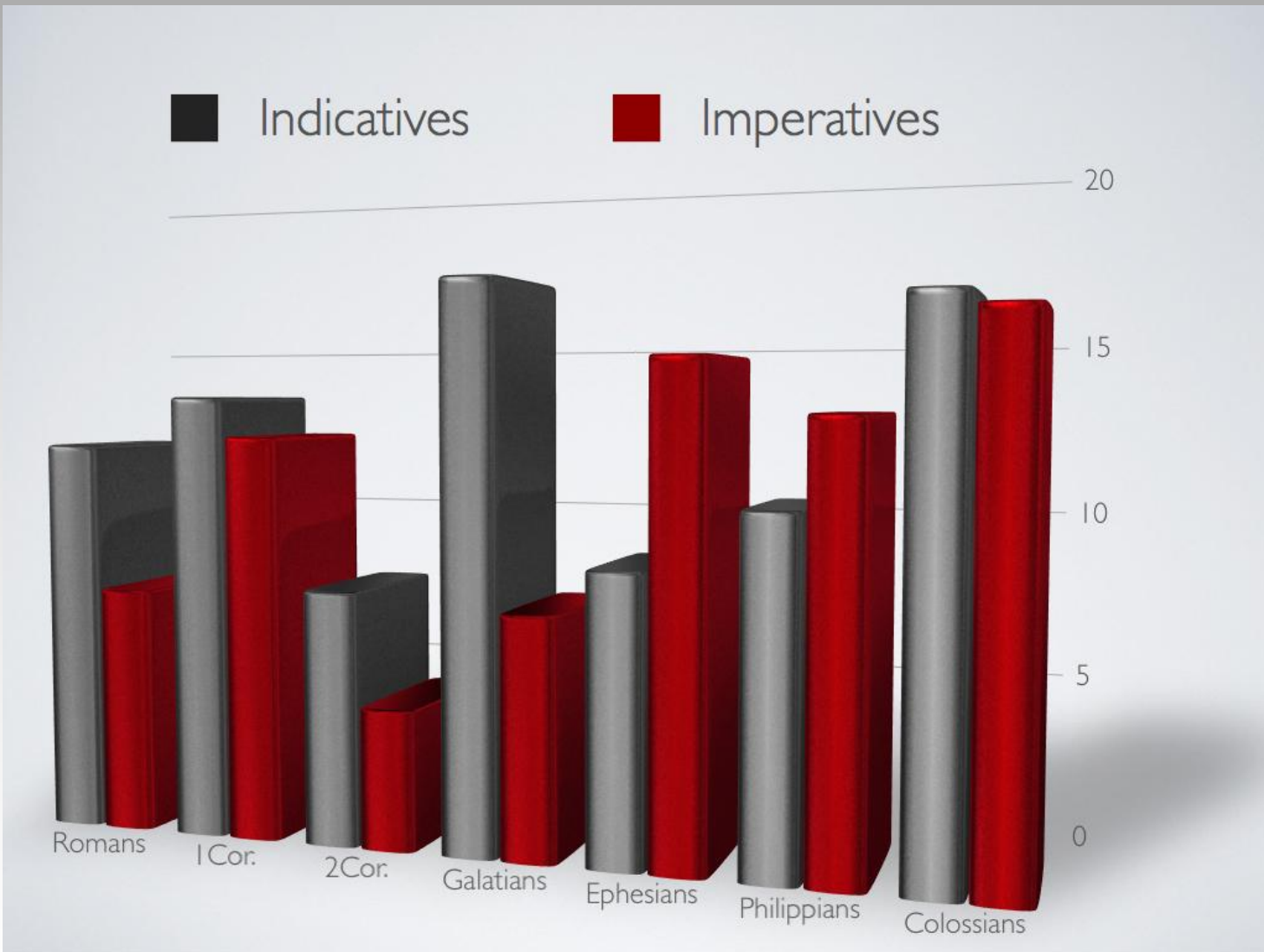
The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

2. Hermeneutics: Next we apply the proper hermeneutic in order to assure that we are interpreting the Scriptures in a manner consistent with the intent of the original authors. We employ the historical-grammatical method of interpretation.

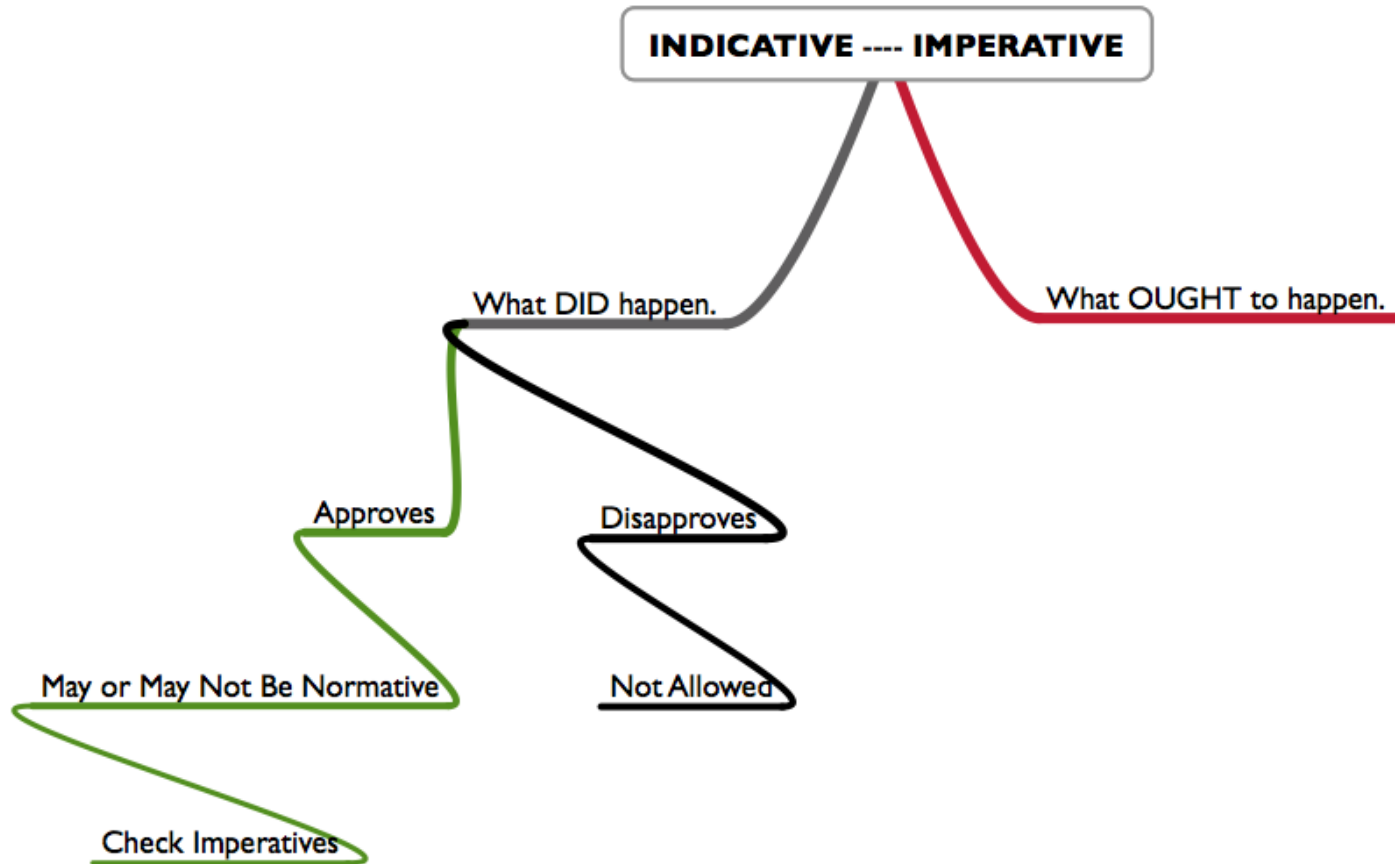
The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology



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The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

3. Biblical Theology: We apply our hermeneutic to the Bible and develop a biblical theology that considers the entire context of the Bible.

Every doctrine must be examined in context: the immediate context of the passage, the chapter, the book, the Testament, and finally, the entire sweep of redemptive history.

The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

4. Systematic Theology: We can now attempt to make definitive statements about various topics in the Bible. Doing biblical theology before systematic theology keeps us from using proof texts to improperly justify elements of our systematic theology.

The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

5. Practical Theology: We use our systematic theology to determine how we conduct ourselves as Christians. Orthodoxy leads to orthopraxy. This is how Paul does theology. Ephesians is a great example. Chapters 1-3 are biblical and systematic theology. Chapters 4-6 are practical theology.

The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

6. Experience: We interpret our experiences by checking them over against the five steps of theology.

The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

- 1. Scripture**
- 2. Hermeneutics**
- 3. Biblical Theology**
- 4. Systematic Theology**
- 5. Practical Theology**
- 6. Experience**

The Formulation of Doctrine or Theology

Doing theology in this order helps us build our worldview and interpret our everyday experiences. It helps us make sense of our experiences so that they can play the proper role in our lives. Experience enhances our theology, but it should never determine our theology.