



Southeastern
Baptist Theological Seminary

Theological Studies: Christian Ethics/Public Theology – Entrance Exam Study Guide

The Ph.D. Entrance Exam in Theological Studies will consist of essay questions in two parts, each part approximately 3 hours in length.

Part 1 (the morning session) will assess readiness for work in Theological Studies generally. You will have some choice concerning which questions to answer, but it is understood that you will answer all questions in your anticipated area of specialization: Christian Ethics, Church History, Philosophy of Religion, or Systematic Theology.

Part 2 (the afternoon session) will assess readiness for advanced work in one of six areas of specialization. You will select one area of specialization and will answer questions in that area only. You may have some choice concerning which questions to answer.

The exam will be closed book, so you will not be allowed to use any resources other than the writing instruments you bring with you and the writing paper and instructional materials that will be provided in your exam folder.

Applicants are expected to be prepared to write for 90 minutes on any of the following questions. Essays will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Relevance and Argumentation

- Students should give careful attention to the question and outline refined arguments. Student should incorporate & critically interact with relevant resources related to the field.

Writing Mechanics

- Students' responses should be intelligent, and precise. Reasonable arrangement of paragraphs and ideas should enhance a reader's understanding. Responses should be focused, and vocabulary varied. Responses should contain very few grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

Awareness of Relevant Scholarship

- Students should show awareness of seminal sources, major figures and pivotal events related to the field and incorporate and properly interact with resources related to the question.

Part 1: Theological Studies (Area)

Books:

McGrath, Alister. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*. Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.

Wellum, Stephen. *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016.

Clark, David. *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2003.

Lindberg, Carter. *The European Reformations*. 2nd ed. Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Wiley- Blackwell, 2010.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper, 1975.

Allen, Diogenes with Eric O. Springsted. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 2nd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007.

Questions:

1. Discuss the proper relationship between theology, philosophy, and ethics, including where the fields overlap and what is distinctive to each.
2. Provide an overview of sound evangelical theological method, giving special attention to the approach of David Clark in *To Know and Love God*. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of Clark's approach?
3. Discuss the doctrine of providence, commenting on the following aspects: (a) the definition, biblical basis and theological importance of this doctrine; (b) key contributors to the historical development of this doctrine; and (c) philosophical and ethical challenges that have been raised against the doctrine of providence, especially in the modern period. Students are not asked to give a response to these challenges, simply to show their awareness of them.
4. Describe some of the major features of postmodern culture and the questions these developments raise for the disciplines of systematic theology, Christian ethics, and philosophy of religion. Also identify, if any, features of postmodern culture that are either consistent with or supportive of key claims made by these disciplines. In what ways?
5. For the magisterial, radical, English and Catholic reformations, (a) state succinctly the key concerns, (b) identify the major figures, and (c) assess the achievements and

lasting contributions made by each to the history of the church, and to the fields of systematic theology, Christian ethics, and philosophy of religion, if any.

6. Expound the doctrine of the person of Christ by (a) identifying key biblical passages which are major building blocks for this doctrine, (b) tracing major historical events in the development of this doctrine (not just in the patristic era but including the modern era), (c) stating at least four major points that should be included in teaching this doctrine systematically, and (d) explaining how this doctrine affects the Christian life in its ethical dimension.

Part 2: Christian Ethics (Concentration)

Books:

Beach, Waldo and H. Richard Niebuhr. *Christian Ethics: Sources of the Living Tradition*. 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973.

Feinberg, John S. and Paul D. Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010.

Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2008.

Jones, David W. *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013.

Wright, N. T. *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010.

Questions:

1. Identify three theological doctrines you consider most relevant to Christian ethics. Explain how each affects moral understanding and behavior. Conclude by discussing how deviations from the doctrines you identify impact Christian ethics.
2. Select three of the Ten Commandments. Discuss the meaning, implications and applications of each. Be sure to identify any important interpretive issues involved. Close with a discussion of different views on whether and to what degree New Testament Christians are still governed by these three commandments.
3. Identify and discuss various ways the biblical view of sexual morality is being challenged in contemporary culture. Start with an overview of the biblical approach defining what

makes sexual behavior moral or immoral. Then explain and evaluate different opposing approaches on sexual morality influential in the culture.

4. Discuss the doctrine of creation and its relevance to Christian ethics. Explain how the status of man and woman as creatures in creation relates to moral accountability. Conclude by discussing how different views on the *imago Dei* affect Christian moral understanding.
5. Discuss how Christian ethics relates to philosophy. Explain and defend whether you think Christian ethics should be classified as theology or philosophy. Then discuss how the Bible, reason, experience, and tradition relate to Christian ethics. Close by identifying different views and defend the one you think is correct.
6. Identify figures you think have most influenced Christian ethics through history. For each figure, explain main ideas, list important literature, and discuss how that person affected the history and development of Christian moral understanding.