



From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research

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The Scholar's Dilemma: Writing a Theological Research Paper

Question number one for many students entering biblical studies programs, whether graduate or undergraduate, is often, "How do I write a research paper?," which is quickly followed by, "How do I do theological research?" But those questions often go unanswered. In his new book, *From Topic to Thesis*, Michael Kibbe puts forth five steps for efficiently accomplishing that common assignment.

"This book is, at heart, a how-to guide—an owner's manual, so to speak," writes Kibbe. "Its contribution stems from two facts: students simply do not get adequate guidance on how to complete their assigned projects, and professors do not have the space in their curricula to provide that guidance. The book is designed for relatively independent use; that is, professors should not have to walk students through the material. Students should be able to open the book and, using the research paper description given in the syllabus (along with any supplemental instructions their professors may have given), conduct their research."

The concepts covered include: finding direction, gathering sources, understanding issues, entering the discussion and establishing a position. Students should be able to walk through this book and those five steps, guiding a research topic into a research paper.

"This small handbook is precisely what every beginning theology student needs to write a coherent, well-argued, properly researched essay," praises Gary M. Burge of Wheaton College. "Mike Kibbe is not only a master teacher (his instructional style is evident throughout) but he is a master researcher (whose recent PhD demonstrates his fresh skills). Let Kibbe become your coach and encourager. If you do, you'll find guidance for how to organize that winning research project. You'll find lists of common errors that countless students make. But above all, you'll discover a goldmine of wisdom that I wish we could put into the hands of every student who sets out to write a paper."

In addition to walking students through this process, Kibbe also provides a number of appendix resources, covering such topics as

- ten things you should *never* do in a theological research paper
- theological research and writing tools
- scholarly sources for theological research
- online research databases
- bibliography software
- a suggested timeline for theological research papers

"There is something deeply satisfying about moving from chaos to order, from confusion to

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BOOK DETAILS

Michael Kibbe (PhD, Wheaton College) is assistant professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute-Spokane in Spokane, Washington, where he teaches Greek and hermeneutics. He is the author of *Godly Fear or Ungodly Failure? Hebrews 12 and the Sinai Theophanies* and has published articles in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, *Biblica*, the *Journal of Theological Interpretation* and the *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters*. His research interests include the Epistle to the Hebrews, the use of the Old Testament in the New, the doctrine of the atonement, theological exegesis, and Second Corinthians and the reception history of Exodus and Deuteronomy. He lives in Spokane, Washington, with his wife, Annie, and their two children.

clarity, from ignorance to understanding,” writes Kibbe in the conclusion. “Just as we enjoy the transition from a pile of boards and screws to a fully functional desk, we can enjoy the transition from the vagueness of a topic to the concreteness of a thesis. My hope is that this book not only enables you to do theological research, but also to enjoy it.”

