

**ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**  
**100 Key Doctrines in Plain Language**  
**by R.C. Sproul**

One of the enduring hallmarks of Dr. Sproul's ministry is his ability to explain the theologically difficult in language and ways the average Christian can understand. This 1992 offering is perhaps his most enduring proof of that enduring hallmark.

The shorthand of the theologian is often lost on the layman especially the new Christian wondering if Providence is anything more than the name of a town in Rhode Island, who can struggle with the difference between sanctification and justification, and maybe even transubstantiation (explained in this reference work but obviously not endorsed as this compilation is clearly from a Reformed vantage point, and a Reformed Presbyterian at that... although serious Bible students from both the Covenant and from the Dispensational camps of theology have and will continue to hail this book for a long time.)

The dust jacket says: "... Dr. Sproul takes theology down off the dusty shelves of theological libraries and expounds in clear and simple terms over 100 major Christian doctrines... Here are theologically sound explanations of Biblical concepts every Christian should know, written in a way we can all understand."

But not only is it written in a way we can understand, it is organized and at times even diagrammed in ways we can understand. Now the diagrams are not the fanciest in the realm – actually, they're not much more in most cases than you or I might sketch out on a paper napkin in the coffee shop or breakfast café where we have our weekly Bible study with a couple of friends. But, they're good! And they're helpful.

The book begins by laying out the case for itself (though that may not have been the author's real intention – just seemed that way to me) as it discusses and defines ten most significant issues that work against the spiritual maturing of Christians in our day. And then he exhorts us to theological growth by explaining how the study of theology feeds our soul, and if that weren't enough, how God commands us to diligence in our study of His Word. Sproul concludes the Introductory foundation by exhorting us to recognize the seriousness of our learning ever more about God. "... theology must never be viewed as an abstract science. It is a matter of life and death, even eternal life and eternal death. This book is intended as a guided tour through those life and death issues on the theological landscape." Thus warned of the difficult journey toward spiritual maturity, and challenged to remember what is at stake in that trek, Sproul begins.

I like this book a lot. Got my copy at a Ligonier convention in Austin, TX thirteen years ago and have had many occasions to use it over the years in teaching adult Sunday School and working with teenagers. Nearly every topic is dealt with in two or three pages (for those of us with short attention spans, this is great), and those pages are organized into a definition and discussion section, a Summary in short, numbered highlight sentences of the key elements to remember, and "Biblical Passages (references) for Reflection." These hundred doctrines are organized into ten overall categories so that finding specific teachings on the general topics of REVELATION, or THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, or SALVATION for example are quick and easy for all.

The book also contains a SUGGESTED READING LIST. The interesting thing about this list is not only how extensive it is, but the categorizations of the appropriateness of the titles for different Christians. There are books listed under the headings of “Beginning”, “Intermediate”, and “Advanced” and a look at the authors clearly indicates why Sproul separated these recommended readings as he did since the advanced list, heavily populated with the likes of Edwards, Owen, Warfield, Luther, is not the kind of fare for one recently converted.

***Essentials of the Christian Faith*** is an exceptional and worthwhile Theological Dictionary if you will; one filled with clear and deep - but succinct – little treatises on issues that all we Believers should know and be able to explain but often don’t and can’t.

There are a lot of books on my bookshelves I could do without – this is definitely not one of them.

