

Research Papers

Many seminary courses require the writing of a research paper. These vary from three to a hundred pages. The earlier you can get started the better.

So how do you start? Remember the old saying "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." That's the way to tackle a paper-particularly a long one.

Let's first examine what research is not and what research is.

- Research is not
 - a compilation of facts and quotations. Writers must evaluate the ideas of others and draw conclusions of their own.
 - only discourse of the writer's opinions. Writers must provide facts, data, and information from valid sources.
 - a sermon. We often might use research as a basis for a sermon, but the two are very different. A sermon's purpose is to reach the heart and change people's lives. A research paper's goal is to inform and convince the reader. Sermons are oral and use all of the conventions of gestures and speech whereas; research papers depend only on the written word.

- Research is
 - a systematic search, analysis, and synthesis of information on a definable problem that either arrives at a solution or offers an informed opinion.
 - objective. Research is not done with the heart but rather the head.
 - is specific. In order to do quality research your subject must be fairly narrow. A 20-page paper on Augustine must be narrowed to a specific area of his life and work.