

Understanding Theology Readings

Theology is a tough read, and the explanations are often difficult. But there are strategies for plowing through this type of reading. You must become an active reader.

Prereading

- Skim the reading. How is it organized? Are there headings and subheadings? Any bold print? Charts?
- Read the preface and the copyright because they contain valuable information that will tell you who wrote the piece and when. Even the name of the publisher can be valuable knowledge to use when assessing validity.
- Read the introduction, the conclusion, and the bold print. The introduction should contain a thesis stating the position of the author; the conclusion sums up the points made; and text in bold print signifies importance. When you preview the text, you begin your reading with some knowledge and consequently are able to comprehend better.

The first full reading

- Underline, circle or star passages in the book that you consider important. Later, you can review these passages and/or comment on them in class.
- Jot notes in the margins. If you don't understand the text, put a question mark in the margin or write a note. "Why did Calvin say this?" "Huh?"
- Write comments about how you feel regarding the material. "Nature and God one? Recycling." This comment might be the idea for a research paper.
- Look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary and write the meaning in the front of the book. Don't spend time to research every word; often the meaning of a word can be perceived within the context of the reading.

Rereading

- Look back over your stars, underlinings, and comments after the first full reading of the text. Think about what the author is saying. Reread the definitions that you wrote in the front of the book.
- Write a short summary of the reading in a journal or at the end of the text. Do this immediately so that your ideas are fresh. If there are parts you didn't understand, say that in your summary.
- Talk to your classmates. They have read this material, are probably struggling too, and will have different insights