

JANUARY EIBCC MONTHLY MEETING FOLLOW UP  
**FOSTERING BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH WISE  
THEOLOGICAL TRIAGE<sup>1</sup> (Matt Magee)**

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Theological triage has become an increasingly helpful thought-grid for leading people to consider the importance of doctrines which people disagree on. The goal of theological triage is to display Christian maturity in doctrinal debate flowing from humility, yet not devoid of theological backbone. Theological triage focuses biblical conviction toward doctrines that matter most.

While theological triage may be a newer term, it is not a new concept. The often quoted phrase, *in essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, charity*, encouraged believers of Rupertus Meldenius' day (early 17th-century German theologian known for having coined the phrase) to act lovingly, humbly, and with great conviction, ultimately fostering biblical community.

## Resources

1. R. Albert Mohler Jr., *A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity*, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity> (Published July 12, 2005).
2. Gavin Ortlund, "When Should Doctrine Divide?," The Gospel Coalition, August 14, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/when-should-doctrine-divide>
3. Gavin Ortlund, "3 Reflections on Cultivating Theological Poise," The Gospel Coalition, August 10, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cultivating-an-ethos-of-poise>.
4. Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage*, The Gospel Coalition Booklet Series. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).
5. Andrew David Naselli, *BI206 New Testament Exegesis: Understanding and Applying the New Testament*, Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
6. Rhyné R. Putman, *When Doctrine Divides the People of God: An Evangelical Approach to Theological Diversity*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> R. Albert Mohler introduced me to theological triage and, with Gavin Ortlund, has significantly shaped my thinking. This outline is largely a distillation of their teaching (see last page for sources). R. Albert Mohler Jr., "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity," <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity> (Published July 12, 2005). Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage*, The Gospel Coalition Booklet Series. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

## Questions for Personal Consideration

1. How does the Bible guide your personal commitment to doctrines?
2. Who has so marked your spiritual journey that you hold them in such high regard? Which of their views do you take largely because of your endearment to them for their godly influence in their life (this is not a comment on the veracity of their views, just an admission of their influence to you)?
3. What issues/doctrines do you get emotional about (whether you show it or not)? What is the emotion associated with each?
4. How might theological triage help you as a counselor?

## Homework Assignment(s) for Guiding Those in Conflict Using a Similar Thought Process

This is intended to be used over multiple weeks you can tailor to their situation.

1. What are the first thoughts that arise in your mind/heart when you think about this conflict?
2. How have you been hurt in this situation?
3. How have you hurt another in this situation?
4. Read Galatians 5:1-6:10 prayerfully several times.
  - a. Describe how Paul is encouraging the Galatian Christians to embrace their freedom in Christ.
  - b. What is the encouragement in Galatians 5:13-14?
  - c. Describe the warning in verse 15. How are you “consuming one another” in your conflict?
  - d. Are you fighting for or fighting against your adversary? Who is your ultimate adversary (see also 1 Peter 5:6-11)?
  - e. How does Paul describe the remedy in Galatians 5:16-26?
  - f. What is the believer’s responsibility in Galatians 6:1-10?
  - g. How do these questions directly relate to the conflict you’re experiencing?

5. Questions to guide a counselee's thought-process:

- a. How significant is the topic of this disagreement to your or their personal witness of Christ's work in your/their life (focus first on your responsibility)?
- b. Is the conflict issue a clear sin issue according to the Bible? ... a conscience issue? ...a wisdom issue? ... a preference issue? (This is a reframing of theological triage in four levels. Use this framework as you consider the other questions.)
- c. Considering what you read in Galatians, what is your responsibility to Christ to fight for the one with whom you're in conflict? (This question should not be considered simplistically.)
- d. What are your ultimate desires in resolving your conflict? Ask the Spirit to help you identify desires of the flesh that are against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17, 19-21, 26). List 5 specific, tangible desires of the flesh you are aware of in yourself.
- e. Ask the Spirit to help you identify desires of the flesh that are in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 22-25). List 5 very specific, tangible ways you will keep in step with the Spirit.

6. Action Steps

- a. Having identified the issues in 5b above, write
- b. Write a specific prayer for the attitude of your heart.
- c. Write a specific prayer for the one with whom you are in conflict.
- d. Describe 3 actions you will take this week to fight for the one with whom you have conflict.
- e. After taking these action steps, make a bulleted list of 5-7 observations of the actions you took, how they responded, and your response to them again. We'll discuss these over the next couple weeks.