

Theological Equipping Class

What is Theology?

January 8, 2023

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Jesus was a great teacher, but not God.
- Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.
- Even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation.
- Worshiping alone or with one's family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church.
- Gender identity is a matter of choice
- The Bible's commands regarding and prohibition of homosexuality are valid today.
- Religious belief is a matter of personal opinion; it is not about objective truth.

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The goal: *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.* (Acts 20:26–27)

What does the whole counsel of God include?

- In the OT, God commanded the Israelite calendar, holidays, diet, clothing, economy, employment practices, education, marriage, divorce, civil government, prayer, singing, etc.
- What about the NT?
 - *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Defining Theology

- Theos (God) + logos (word)
- “a word about God based on the word of God.”
- “Rational discussion respecting the deity.” (Augustine, 4th -5th century)
- “Faith seeking understanding.” (Anselm of Canterbury, 11th century)
- “Theology is the study of God and his relations to, purpose for, and work within the created universe.” (Bruce Ware)
- “the application of the Word of God by persons to all areas of life.” (John Frame)
- orthodoxy, right belief | orthokardia, right-heartedness | orthopraxy, right living.

Thoughts on Theology

1. Everyone is a theologian.

- “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us” (A.W. Tozer)
- “We are all called theologians, just as [we are] all [called] Christians.” (Martin Luther)
- Theology is inevitable.

2. Theology is essential.

- *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* (John 17:3)
- *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2)
- Know thyself?
- Necessary vs. sufficient conditions
 - Is knowledge necessary?
 - Is knowledge sufficient?
- “If our theology does not quicken the conscience and soften the heart, it actually hardens both; if it does not encourage the commitment of faith, it reinforces the detachment of unbelief; if it fails to promote humility, it inevitably feeds pride.” (JI Packer)

3. Theology is profoundly practical.

- The consequences of Romans 1
 - Immorality as a picture of idolatry
 - *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.* (Romans 1:28–31)
- heterodoxy leads to heteropraxy

- Why study theology?

1. To obey God. God commands that we think. He commands that we repent of false thoughts.

- *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)*
- *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith... (1 Timothy 6:20–21)*
- *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ... (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)*
- *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)*
- *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)*
- *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. (2 Timothy 2:7)*
- *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... (Hosea 4:6)*
- *Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge. (Proverbs 23:12)*

2. To mortify sin.

- *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)*
- *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds... (Ephesians 4:22–23)*

3. To love and glorify God

"God did not give us minds as ends in themselves. The mind provides the kindling for the fires of the heart. Theology serves doxology. Reflection serves affection. Contemplation serves exultation. Together they glorify Christ to the full." (John Piper)

"The main reason God has given us minds is that we might seek out and find all the reasons that exist for treasuring him *in* all things and *above* all things." (Piper)

4. To love others

“People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy.” (GK Chesterton)

4. There is no necessary disconnect between head and heart.
 - The greatest commandment?
 - “It has always been a sin not to love the Lord our God with our minds as well as our hearts and souls... We have excused this with a degree of pietism and pretending that this is something other than what it is – that is, sin... Evangelicals need to repent of their refusal to think Christianly and to develop the mind of Christ.” (Os Guinness)
 - Theology fuels doxology (which is worship).
 - The heart can’t love what the mind doesn’t know.
 - "Indeed, thoughts and affections are *sibi mutuo causae* – the mutual causes of each other: "Whilst I mused, the fire burned" (Psalm 39:3); so that thoughts are the bellows that kindle and inflame affections; and then if they are inflamed, they cause thoughts to boil..." (Thomas Goodwin)
 - The goal of theology is to gather kindling for the Spirit to inflame. The more wood, the hotter the fire can burn.
 - Circular and symbiotic
5. There are various branches of theology.
 - natural theology
 - “We know God by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book.” (Belgic Confession)
 - apologetics which is the application of theology to a defense of the faith.
 - practical theology which is a misnomer because all theology is practical, but this field is related to ethics and covers things like spiritual disciplines and how to apply theology to life.
 - biblical theology which generally looks at how a particular doctrine is developed in a particular book of the Bible or in the Old or New Testament.
 - historical theology which asks, how has this particular doctrine been developed over time.
 - systematic theology
 - “*Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, “What does the whole Bible teach us today?” about any given topic.* (Wayne Grudem)
 - theology proper considers the doctrine of God
 - Christology: the doctrine of Christ
 - Pneumatology: the doctrine of the Spirit
 - Anthropology: man
 - Hamartiology: sin

- Soteriology: salvation
 - Ecclesiology: church
 - Eschatology: end times
 - bibliology: Bible.
6. Theology must be developed and disciplined.

- *Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.* (Psalm 111:2)
- Proverbs 2 and buried treasure

How to Become a Better Theologian

“A method, of course, is a self-conscious way of going about doing something.” (Robert Jenson)

1. Attend a church that takes theology seriously.
2. Study the Bible.
3. Read theology.
4. Listen to classes, sermons, and podcasts.
5. Pray.
6. Be in community with others who take theology seriously.

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.
(Proverbs 18:1)

7. Repent of sin.

The importance of humility:

- “All men and women exist in a state of epistemological pilgrimage.” (Paul Helm)
- “We know so little of God, because it is God who is thus to be known” (John Owen)
- “In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that – and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison – you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.” (CS Lewis)

