

**ANSWER KEY**



# **Belief Matters:**

A Crash Course in Christian Theology



S E M I N A R



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This material was first prepared and presented by Tim Wiebe, March 2017. Revised Fall 2020.

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# The Nature, Value, and Practice of Theology

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## I. Introduction(s)

## II. What is Theology?

- A. "Theology" is a combination of the Greek words *theos* (God) and *logos* (word). Most simply, then, theology is "words about God" or "the study of God."
1. As Christians, we study the God who has revealed Himself to us in the Bible.
  2. The goal of theology isn't just to STUDY God, but to KNOW God.

"God has revealed himself to us in his word and given us his Spirit that we might understand the truth....if we have a Bible, not to mention an embarrassment of riches when it comes to resources in English, why wouldn't we want to understand as much of God's self-revelation as possible? **Theology is getting more of God.**"  
- Kevin DeYoung, blog post: "Why We Must Be Unapologetically Theological," emphasis added.

“The Christian belief system, which the Christian knows to be grounded in divine revelation, is relevant to all of life.”

- Carl F.H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, p. 113.

### 3. Theology is ALL-ENCOMPASSING.

#### Traditional categories of systematic theology:

- ▶ **Prolegomena** (“first words” or “first things”): the nature, value, and task of theology
- ▶ **Bibliology** (“the study of the Bible”): the nature and character of Scripture
- ▶ **Theology Proper** (“the study of God”): among other things, deals with the attributes of God and God-as-Trinity
- ▶ **Anthropology** (“the study of man”): creation and humanity
- ▶ **Hamartiology** (“the study of sin”): the origin of sin, the nature of sin, the extent of sin, and the consequences of sin
- ▶ **Christology** (“the study of Jesus Christ”): Jesus’ identity and work in His incarnation
- ▶ **Soteriology** (“the study of salvation”): looks at Christ’s work on the cross and His resurrection (objective aspect) and more subjective aspects: election, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, glorification
- ▶ **Pneumatology** (“the study of the Holy Spirit”): including His identity and work (both in Scripture and in the church today)
- ▶ **Angelology** (“the study of angels”): angels, demons, Satan, and the spiritual world
- ▶ **Ecclesiology** (“the study of the church”): among other things, the purposes, priorities, and practices of the church
- ▶ **Eschatology** (“the study of last things”): not just “end times events”; has a broader understanding of the ultimate direction that God is taking history as we move into the future - both from individual and corporate perspectives

B. Five definitions of theology from “the pros”:

1. "Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, 'What does the whole Bible teach us today?' about any given topic" (Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology*, p. 21).
2. "...theology is the study of God....Naturally it is not concerned merely with God in himself, but with the activity of God and with every area of human thought and experience which is affected by belief in God" (I. Howard Marshall, *Pocket Guide to New Testament Theology*, p. 5).
3. "Systematic theology is the cognitive and passionate enterprise that seeks to know and love the God of the gospel and to demonstrate its understanding in forms of obedient speech and practice" (Kevin Vanhoozer, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 773).
4. "Evangelical systematic theology is this: it is the science by which evangelical believers learn of God. It is rooted in the Bible and focused on Christ. Through this knowledge, the Spirit transforms us into followers of Christ and forms us into Christian communities, awakening in us the wisdom of God that leads to genuine worship and cultural transformation. Through theology we know and love God" (David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God*, p. xxxii).
5. "Theology...encompasses a framework for thinking about the world and a vision for living in it. It seeks to capture the minds and hearts of believers so that they might think Christianly and act Christianly. Theology is the most noble and impassioned of disciplines, and if confined to the classroom, it will shrivel and die" (Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, p. 81).

C. A working definition of Christian theology:

**Christian theology is bringing all of God’s Word to bear on all of life, so that each of our lives - and every part of our lives - increasingly reflects the beliefs, values, and practices that cultivate communion with the triune God and advance His mission in the world.**

1. This definition emphasizes the final SOURCE of Christian theology: all of God’s Word.
2. This definition shows the REACH that theology should have: each of our lives, and every part of our lives.
3. This definition keeps us focused on two key PURPOSES of theology: communion with God and serving the advance of His mission in the world.
4. This definition helps us see that theology is not a “TO-DO BOX” to check off once and for all; rather, theology cultivates a relationship that GROWS and MATURES. We don’t move past what theology offers; we move further into it.

“When we see the relationship between theology and worship we are moved beyond intellectual curiosity to an engaged encounter with the living God.”  
- Kelly Kapic, *A Little Book for New Theologians*, p. 37

### III. Why Study Theology?

#### A. Why we don't

#### B. Why we must

##### 1. Direct benefits

- a. It is an act of obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20).
  
- b. Studying theology helps us both learn right ways of thinking and living, and “unlearn” wrong ways of thinking and living (i.e., theology helps teach and correct). See 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
  
- c. Theology is vital to our transformation and growth in Christ-likeness - our spiritual maturity (Matt 22:37-40; Rom 12:2; Eph 4:20-24; Col 1:28-29).

**Romans 12:2:**

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The question isn't whether or not theology is important; everyone has a theology – their beliefs about God, death, the purpose of life, how we all got here, worship, and so much more.

**Theology is important because everyone is a theologian.**

“We practice theology in order to guide the church as it thinks and speaks about God. This work is our specific commission. God has given us the task of bringing order to the church's language, and this task puts us in a position of service rather than superiority. We are responsible for directing the church so that its prayer and preaching correspond to God's being and character. Our goal is to help the church become confident that its claims about God are true so it can teach believers within the church - and proclaim the gospel to those outside the church - in grace and truth.”  
- Keith L. Johnson,  
*Theology as Discipleship*,  
p. 77

## 2. Indirect reasons

- a. Theology is important because EVERYONE DOES IT.

"Everyone has warned me not to tell you what I am going to tell you... They all say 'the ordinary reader does not want Theology; give him plain practical religion.' I have rejected their advice. I do not think the ordinary reader is such a fool. Theology means 'the science of God,' and I think any man who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available. You are not children: why should you be treated like children? "Theology is practical. Everyone reads, everyone hears things discussed. Consequently, if you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones – bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas. For a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today, are simply the ones which real Theologians tried centuries ago and also rejected" (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp. 135-37).

- b. Theology is important because OF WHAT'S AT STAKE.



#### IV. How Should I “Do Theology”?

A. With the whole Bible as our FINAL AUTHORITY.

B. As part of a COMMUNITY of believers.

C. In a spirit of confidence AND humility.

D. For the purpose of ever-increasing holiness, worship, obedience, etc.

“...the systematic theologian, since he aspires to synthesize the teaching of the *whole* Bible, must spend more time with Scripture than anybody else.”

- John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, p. 278

“One of the advantages of studying Christian writers from a previous age is that they give us a different perspective on matters that concern us. Another advantage is that they raise subjects that do not concern us, and are worthy of our attention. One of the best ways to escape the preoccupations and blindnesses of our own age is to find out how Christians of other ages have thought about and practiced their Christianity. Their reading of the Bible will always be a challenge to us. To stand somewhere else in history is a good way of seeing our own times more clearly.”

- Peter Adam, *Hearing God's Words*, p. 202

**Titus 2:1:**

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

**V. Five (Overlapping) Pictures Illustrating Why Theology is Important and What it Offers**

A. Theology as "FOUNDATION."

B. Theology as "FENCE."

C. Theology as "FILTER."

D. Theology as “FOUNTAIN.”

E. Theology as “FUEL.”

“Christian doctrine [a word that is pretty much interchangeable with theology] feeds the soul of the believer and enables him to grow in Christian faith and understanding. Although the study of doctrine can be merely a matter of the mind, the mind can be the route by which the Word of God reaches the heart and influences the life. Christian doctrine, studied in a spirit of humility and prayer, opens up the mind to the revelation of God and provides spiritual food for the believer. He learns more of the character of God whom he worships, he understands more fully the tragic situation from which he has been saved, he appreciates more fully the wonder of the divine grace which saved him, and he realizes more of the spiritual possessions which God wishes to bestow upon him.

“Christian doctrine thus provides the fuel for devotion. It sets the heart on fire with love for God and gives the inspiration for worship. It is arguable that much Christian worship is cold and formal, simply because it lacks an adequate basis in the presentation of Christian doctrine. Christian worship is the human response to divine revelation, and it is only when worship is based on the presentation of the Word of God to the congregation that they can respond with warmed hearts and give God intelligent praise and service” (I. Howard Marshall, *Pocket Guide to New Testament Theology*, pp. 8-9).



# A Tour of Theology: Key Landmarks

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## I. Introduction

We now turn to surveying some of the key topics that are often covered in evangelical systematic theologies. While we're only going to touch on these things here - and there are going to be some important things we don't take time to cover - this exercise is still worthwhile.

**Here's why:** This survey will help orient you to "true north" in terms of healthy belief. It will whet your appetite for further study on your own or with a group of others. And it will show you that "belief matters" - for our obedience, our worship, and our continued spiritual maturity as we follow Jesus. These aren't just abstract ideas - these things mean something for our lives and touch on our lives in very direct ways.

### **A quick word on format:**

For each category of theology covered, we'll ask three important questions:

- **Why?** Why does this matter? What's at stake?
- **What?** What are some of the "essential ingredients" of this area of theology? What does the Bible teach about this topic?
- **So what?** What difference does belief in this area make in my everyday life? How does this belief matter?

**2 Timothy 3:16-17:**

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

## II. The Bible (“Bibliology”)

### A. Why?

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12
2. God has given us a book! And Who it’s from should absolutely shape HOW we approach it.

### B. What?

Five key words you need to factor in to how you approach the Bible:

1. Revelation:
  - a. **The God who is above us and does not depend on us for anything has chosen to make himself known.** Or, stated another way: "Revelation is the disclosure by God of truths at which people could not arrive without divine initiative and enabling" (Yarbrough, *NDBT* 732).
  - b. Key verses: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; also Amos 3:7

2. Inspiration:

- a. If revelation says *that* God has spoken, inspiration is the means by which God revealed this truth about Himself. **The biblical doctrine of inspiration maintains that God is the primary Author of Scripture, and that He worked through human authors to communicate His message!**

- b. Key verses: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21

3. Inerrancy:

- a. The Bible is without error. God's Word does not contradict itself. *Properly interpreted*, God's Word is true.

- b. Key verses: John 17:17; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18

4. Canon

“Canon” is the technical word for saying that the 66 books we have in our Old and New Testaments are the boundaries for God's written Word: We aren't missing anything, and we don't have anything extra. The 66 books we have are uniquely authoritative for the life of the church. They are the “measure” or the “rule” against everything else should be judged.

**For your bookshelf:**

- Craig Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions*
- Jonathan Morrow, *Questioning the Bible: 11 Major Challenges to the Bible's Authority*

**Jeremiah 23:29:**  
“Is not my word like fire,”  
declares the LORD, “and  
like a hammer that breaks  
a rock in pieces?”

## 5. Impact

a. If we can't point to identifiable ways the Word of God is having its way with us, and continuing to change us, we should rightfully question whether we're approaching it the right way!!

b. Key verses: Psalm 19; Psalm 119; Jeremiah 23:29; Hebrews 4:12

## C. So what?

1. Come hungry to the Bible.

2. Make it a goal to read God's Word daily.

3. Obey God's Word.



## VI. God ("Theology Proper")

### A. Why?

"What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us" (A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 1).

### B. What?

#### 1. Some biblical attributes of God

##### a. Traits that are unique to God, or "how is God different than us?" (A sampling.)

- Omnipresence: God is not bound by space. God is everywhere (Jeremiah 23:23-24; Psalm 139:7-10; 1 Kings 8:27; Acts 7:48).
- Omnipotence: God can do anything that is consistent with His will and character (Genesis 18:14; Job 42:2; Matthew 19:26; Eph 3:20).
- Omniscience: God knows everything (Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:12-14; Heb 4:13).

##### b. Traits that God shares with us, or "how is God like us?" (A sampling.)

- Holiness: 1 Peter 1:16
- Love & goodness: 1 John 4:8-16
- Truthfulness: John 17:17; Titus 1:2; Col 3:9-10
- Creativity: Genesis 1-2
- Justice/righteousness: Prov 14:21; 22:22-23
- Etc etc.

#### **Exodus 34:6-7:**

The LORD passed before Moses and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

## 2. Some biblical acts of God

- a. Creation (Genesis 1-2)
- b. Redemption (cf. life, ministry and death of Jesus, esp Rom 5:8, ch. 8)
- c. Miracles (cf. esp Gospels & Acts, cf. also prophets)

These examples of God's activity in authoring creation and providing for redemption, proven again and again in Scripture, show us God's involvement in the world and His power. God has acted in the world, God will act in the world, and God does act in the world. This world was created by God. He has a plan for it. And He can (and does) intervene in it. These statements should all be profoundly motivating.

## 3. The Trinity (and by the way...we probably won't solve this today)

- a. Introductory comments
- b. What "Trinity" doesn't mean

- There are three gods we worship. (This would be tri-theism.) The three persons of the Godhead are NOT completely distinct and isolated from the other.
- The same god simply wears different "hats" when he's fulfilling different roles. (Heresy known as modalism.)

"When the true story gets told, whether in the partial light of historical perspective or in the perfect light of eternity, it may well be revealed that the worst sin of the church at the end of the twentieth century has been the trivialization of God."

- Donald McCullough, *The Trivialization of God*

c. What "Trinity" does mean

- ▶ There is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4)
- ▶ God is three persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Each person is fully God
  - Father: John 6:27; 17:3; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3
  - Son: Matt 28:9; John 1:1-4; 1:14; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:3; 1 John 5:20
  - Spirit: Acts 5:3-4; given many of the same attributes as deity through Scripture (involved in creation, Gen 1; omnipresent, Psalm 139; etc...)
- ▶ Other "hints" at plurality and Trinity-thinking: Genesis 1:26-27; Matt 3:16-17; 28:19-20; Rom 8:9; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

d. Is the Trinity really that big of a deal for Christianity?

- ▶ Answer: **Yes.**
- ▶ Here's why (a lot more we could say here!): This doctrine of the Trinity – though it stretches the mind – was emphasized in the early church and was a big deal! Their mentality wasn't "we can't understand so it must be secondary." The doctrine of the Trinity was huge (cf. Nicene Creed and surrounding history)! The message of the gospel and salvation was at stake!

This doctrine needs to remain a priority today! We lose something if we overemphasize one of the persons of the Godhead to the neglect of the other – either in thought or in practice.

**Matthew 28:19:**

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

"...in the doctrine of the Trinity, the heart of the Christian faith is at stake."  
- Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 115

**5 books about God to buy (and read):**

1. *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer
2. *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer
3. *Desiring God* by John Piper
4. *Yawning at Tigers* by Drew Dyck
5. *Delighting in the Trinity* by Michael Reeves

“At the present moment, we are witnessing a seismic shift in Western anthropology...to the idea of the self as nothing more than a social construction and physical-chemical interactions. In practice, at least, the sovereignty and autonomy of the self govern the...materialist accounts [and it is not] prepared to receive selfhood, humanity, and personhood from another - especially from God - as a gift and a responsibility.”  
- Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* p. 373

C. So what?

1. **Be willing to have your thoughts about God continually shaped and reinforced by God's Word.** This is a lifelong pursuit, and one we need to continually be learning, and re-learning, and re-learning again! As you study God's Word, make one of the questions you ask "What does this passage teach me about God?"
2. **Give room for thoughts about God in your daily life.** Not just in your quiet times, but all throughout the day and in the many scenarios you encounter at work, at home, in your leisure, etc... Refuse to let distractions rob you of frequent interactions with God.
3. **Read good books that help you appreciate God and push you into worship.**
4. **Keep “communion with God” a front-and-center value.** We're not just “learning about God” - we're communing with God!

**VII. Humanity and Sin (“Anthropology” and “Hamartiology”)**

A. Why?

What we believe about who we are, and why we're here, and what's wrong with the world and us (if anything) - these have tremendous implications for the way we live! Belief matters!

## B. What?

### 1. Who are we?

As the pinnacle of God's creation, humans are the image bearers of God. This status both reveals privilege and brings responsibility.

#### a. The privilege:

#### b. The responsibility:

### 2. What are we here for?

a. As humans created in the image of God, we steward the earth as God's representatives and show dignity to others.

b. As followers of Jesus, we make disciples (Matt 28:19) and we build up the church (1 Cor 12:7-31). We are redeemed for the glory of God (Eph 1:11-12; 1 Pet 2:9-10). We "image" God in our daily interactions and spheres of influence - whatever those might be.

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.  
- Genesis 1:27

“Sinful life is a partly depressing, partly ludicrous caricature of genuine human life.”  
- Geoffrey Bromily, quoted in Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, p. 5

### 3. What's wrong with the world (and us)?

a. In a word: sin

b. Toward a theology of sin

- The entrance of sin into the world (Genesis 3).
- The impact of sin: Death; loss of relationship with God, with ourselves, “broken selves” (Genesis 3; Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23).
- The extent of sin
  - Sin reaches everyone (Romans 3:23; 5:12).
  - Sin reaches every part of everyone (Romans 3:10-18; Romans 6:16-17; Romans 8:7-8; Ephesians 4:18; Titus 3:3).
- The response to sin
  - God's response: Consequences. And GRACE.

- Our response:

Wrong ways

Right ways

- Conviction (John 16:7-11)
- Confession (1 John 1:5-9)
- Repentance (Luke 17:3; Acts 3:19, 5:31, 11:18)
- Restitution (Ex 22:3; Prov 6:31; Ezek 33:15; Luke 19:1-10)
- Forgiveness (Matt 6:12-14; 18:35; 2 Cor 2:10; Eph 4:32)
- Reconciliation (Matt 5:24; Eph 2:14-16; 2 Cor 5:18)
- Christian community (James 5:16)

C. So what?

1. Understanding the *imago Dei* (i.e. the image of God) impacts so much of how we live - it shows the value we have and the value we should show others. It tells us about who we're designed to be and how we're designed to live. You have value, design, and purpose! None of these are small things!
2. Understanding sin should drive us to conviction and looking for a solution. The "problem" is big enough, though, that we obviously can't find the solution in ourselves. We need God to step in on our behalf. We need Jesus!

**1 John 1:8-9:**

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

## VIII. Jesus and His Work (“Christology” and “Soteriology”)

### A. Why?

#### **Philippians 3:7-11:**

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

### B. What?

#### 1. What do we need to know about Jesus?

##### a. His person

###### ▸ Fully God:

- Sinless: Luke 4:16 and parallels; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15
- Titles of deity ascribed to Jesus (by Himself or others): John 1:1, 18; 8:57-58; Romans 8:9-10
- Performed actions of deity (Mark 2; Mark 5); worshipped as deity before ascension (Matt 28)

- Fully man: tired (Luke 23:26; John 4:6); thirsty (John 19:28); hungry (Matthew 4:2); human mind (Luke 2:52)



b. His message: The Kingdom of God (e.g. Mark 1:15)

c. His death (e.g. Mark 10:45; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:19-20)

d. His resurrection (see esp 1 Corinthians 15:14, 19)

e. His continuing role and activity

- Jesus' authority as King (Matthew 28:18-20)
- He's "preparing a place for us" (John 14:1-2)
- He provides grace in times of need (Hebrews 4:14-16)
- He's interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25)

### **What is the Kingdom of God?**

The Kingdom is "God's people in God's place under God's rule" (Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, p. 87).

The people of God dwelling in the place of God, enjoying the presence of God (cf Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ*, p. 83).

**Galatians 2:15-16:**

15 “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

“I can say I’ve never met a man or woman who came to spiritual maturity except through discipline. Godliness comes through discipline.”  
- Donald Whitney,  
*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p. 17

2. What do we need to know about Jesus’ work?

a. Justification by grace through faith

b. Sanctification by grace-motivated effort

- Christian spirituality is driven by grace (e.g. Galatians 3:3; 2 Peter 1:3-7; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

- Christian spirituality is a disciplined pursuit (1 Timothy 4:7-8; 2 Peter 1:5)

c. Glorification as our assured hope

C. So what?

**Philippians 3:7-11:** 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

IX. The Holy Spirit (“Pneumatology”)

A. Why?

B. What?

1. The Holy Spirit is clearly identified as God, the third Person of the Trinity: Acts 5:3, 4; Matthew 28:19-20 and acts in ways consistent with deity (e.g. Psalm 139; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 1 Cor 12)

**John 14:16-18:**

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth....you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

**John 16:7:**

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

**Galatians 5:22-23**

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control...


"Indeed, without the Spirit we are left with only a decaffeinated faith. As Orthodox Metropolitan Ignatius Hazim argues, 'Without the Holy Spirit, God is distant, Christ is in the past, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is simple organization, authority is domination, mission is propaganda, worship is the summoning of spirits, and Christian action is the morality of slaves.'" - quoted in Graham Cole, *He Who Gives Life: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 283

2. The Holy Spirit is active from the beginning to the end of the Bible:
  - a. The Spirit involved in creation: Genesis 1:2 (see also Psalm 33:6; 104:29-30; Job 26:13; 33:4; 34:14-15)
  - b. The Spirit involved in Israel's life: Neh 9:20; Isa 63:11; Num 11:17; select Judges; 1 Sam 10:6-7; 11:1-11; 1 Sam 16-17; Num 11:24-25; OT prophets; Ex 31:4-5; 35:30-33; 1 Chr 28:12, et al)
  - c. The Spirit involved in Israel's hope: Ezek 37:1-14; Joel 2; Isa 42; 61
  - d. The Spirit involved in Jesus' life:
    - Conception (Matt 1:18, 20)
    - Baptism (Matt 3:15-17)
    - Temptations (Matt 4:1)
    - Preaching (Luke 4:14-21)
    - Mighty works (Matt 12:22-32, esp. v. 27)
    - Death (Heb 9:11-14)
    - Resurrection (Rom 8:11; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18)
  - e. The Spirit involved in the life of the early church: Some have suggested that the book of Acts could be called "the acts of the Holy Spirit."
  - f. The Spirit involved in our life individually and corporately
    - Individually: regeneration, giver of gifts, etc...
    - Corporately: unity with each other

3. From this Biblical survey, we can identify four priorities that are consistent with the activity and identity of the Holy Spirit:
- a. The Holy Spirit calls us to mission and empowers us for service:
    - Old Testament: Num 27:18; Deut 34:9; Exod 31:1-5; Exod 35:30-31; Judges 3:10; Judges 6:34; Judges 11:29; Judges 13:25; 2 Chronicles 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 10:14-17
    - New Testament: The life and ministry of Jesus (we repeatedly see the Holy Spirit directing and empowering Jesus' ministry - for e.g., Matt. 4:1; Matt 12:28, etc...); also Acts 1:8; 4:8; 13:2-4; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31
  - b. The Holy Spirit is actively involved in the process of salvation.
    - Through the work of the Spirit we see our need for salvation: e.g. John 16:8; cf Acts 16:14; 2 Cor 4:4
    - The work of the Spirit regenerates us and makes us who were dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-2) now alive to God and in right relationship with God: John 3:3, 5-6; Rom 8:2; Titus 3:5-6
    - The Spirit opens up intimacy with God in ways that were impossible before we had the Spirit: Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:6
    - The Spirit helps us grow in godliness over the course of our lifetimes: Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16; Gal 5:22-23a; 2 Thess 2:13
    - The Spirit is a guarantee that the work God has begun in us will find its way to completion: Eph 1:13-14

**Ephesians 1:13-14:**

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

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- c. The Holy Spirit reveals.
    - He inspired people to write Scripture, God’s Word to us: 2 Peter 1:20-21
    - He guides and directs in ways consistent with His mission to advance God’s kingdom and renew creation: Acts 13:2-4; see also Acts 15:28; Acts 16:6-7
    - The Holy Spirit helps us understand and appreciate the gospel: 1 Cor 2:12; Eph 1:17-18. Let’s appreciate the fact that the Holy Spirit doesn’t so much lead us into new and “secret” knowledge, but the Holy Spirit leads us to further appreciate everything Christ has done for us and made available to us!
  
  - d. The Holy Spirit unifies: Eph 4:3-4; Philippians 2:1-2; see also Acts 2:42-47; Eph 2:18-22
4. Within these parameters of how the Spirit is revealed throughout God’s Word, we must allow for some level of mystery to remain in how we understand the Holy Spirit.
- a. John 3:5-8: The Spirit as “wind”
  
  - b. Discerning the activity of the Spirit (“nod” to Graham Cole [contemporary] & Jonathan Edwards [dead guy])
    - Is this consistent with Scripture?

- Does this give glory to Jesus, and is it consistent with the trajectory of Jesus' ministry? (cf. John 16:14-15)
- Does this promote love of God and love for others? (Matt 22:37-40; cf. 1 Cor 2:9-13; Gal 5:16-6:2; Eph 5:18-21)
- Does this lead to the downfall of sin? (Gal 5:16)

### C. So what?

1. Get on mission.
2. Get engaged in the church.
3. Pursue ever-increasing godliness.
4. Experience the presence of God.
5. Live with the assurance of God's future for you.
6. Keep reading, valuing, obeying the Bible.
7. Be the church. (And pursue unity.)

"...if you or I had never been to a church and had read only the Old and New Testaments, we would have significant expectations of the Holy Spirit in our lives."  
- Francis Chan, *Forgotten God*, 2009. p. 30

“...I am assuming that we are all committed to the church. We are not only Christian people; we are also church people. We are not only committed to Christ, we are also committed to the body of Christ. At least I hope so. I trust that none of my readers is that grotesque anomaly, an un-churched Christian. The New Testament knows nothing of such a person. For the church lies at the very center of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a divine afterthought. It is not an accident of history. On the contrary, the church is God’s new community. For his purpose, conceived in past eternity, being worked out in history, and to be perfected in a future eternity, is not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness, but rather to build his church, that is, to call out of the world a people for his own glory.”  
- John Stott, *The Living Church*, p. 19

## X. The Church (“Ecclesiology”)

### A. Why?

1. **Ephesians 3:10:** His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...
2. **Ephesians 5:25:** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

### B. What?

1. The nature of the church
  - a. The church is primarily a people - not a place.
  - b. The church exists for mission - both to display and extend God’s kingdom (Matt 28; Acts 1:8; Eph 1; 2 Peter 2)
  - c. The church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
    - One
    - Holy
    - Catholic
    - Apostolic




## 2. The priorities of the church

Or: What are the seeds sown in early Acts that grow and takes shape in the rest of the New Testament?

- a. Bible-saturated
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Gathered-in-community
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Gospel-centric
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d. God-directed
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- e. Mission-focused
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- f. And interwoven in each of these: Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered

See also Gregg Allison's *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Crossway, 2012)



### 3. The practices of the church

- a. 3 characteristic “marks” of the church (Reformation):  
preaching; sacraments (/ordinances); church discipline  
- formative and corrective (community?)
- b. 9 Marks of a Healthy Church (Mark Dever):  
expositional preaching; biblical theology; the gospel; a  
biblical understanding of conversion; a biblical  
understanding of evangelism; a biblical understanding  
of church membership; biblical church discipline; a  
concern for discipleship and growth; biblical church  
leadership
- c. Your specific local church

### C. So what?

1. Get engaged with the church’s mission.
2. Benefit from the church’s ministry.
3. Be “pro church”: Identify. Involve. Invest.

## XI. Last Things (“Eschatology”)

### A. Why?

1. 1 Peter 3:15
2. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
3. Matthew 25:14-30
4. 1 Peter 4:7-11
5. 2 Peter 3:8-13

### B. What?


1. Jesus is coming back.

#### **1 Peter 3:15:**

...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to **anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you**; yet do it with gentleness and respect...

“To some extent...the degree to which we actually long for Christ’s return is a measure of the spiritual condition of our own lives at the moment.”

- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1093



2. God wins.

3. Eternity is forever. And what we decide now determines where we end up.

C. So what?

1. Trust Jesus.

2. Live ready.

3. Be a good steward of your time (and gifts) now.

4. Share the gospel.

5. Be characterized by hope.

# Theology Taking Shape

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## I. Theology Taking Shape throughout Church History

See especially Michael F. Bird, *What Christians Ought to Believe: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine through the Apostles' Creed*. Zondervan, 2016.

### A. The Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

*He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.*

B. The Nicene Creed (AD 381)

*We believe in one God, the Father all-powerful,  
Maker of all things both seen and unseen.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son  
of God, begotten from the Father before all the ages,  
light from light, true God from true God, begotten  
not made, consubstantial with the Father, through  
whom all things came to be; for us humans and for  
our salvation he came down from the heavens and  
became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and from the  
Virgin Mary, became human and was crucified on  
our behalf under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was  
buried and rose up on the third day in accordance  
with the Scriptures; and he went up into the heavens  
and is seated at the Father's right hand; he is coming  
again with glory to judge the living and the dead; his  
kingdom will have no end.*

*And in the Spirit, the holy, lordly, and life-giving one,  
proceeding forth from the Father, co-worshipped and  
co-glorified with Father and Son, the one who spoke  
through the prophets; in one, holy, catholic, and  
apostolic church. We confess one baptism for the  
forgiving of sins. We look forward to a resurrection  
of the dead and life in the age to come. Amen.*

Be sure and keep your  
eyes on  
[thebrooksideinstitute.net](http://thebrooksideinstitute.net)  
- a site devoted to  
creating and collecting  
resources that build and  
reinforce foundations of  
the Christian faith.

## II. Theology Taking Shape: Local Church Doctrinal Statement / Statement of Faith

## III. Theology Taking Shape in Our Own Lives Personally

- A. Read God's Word – a lot!
- B. Use the resources available to you: community, books and online tools, prayer.
- C. Check out other sections of the Christian bookstore (storefront or virtual).
- D. Be willing to ask questions. **And then work towards an answer from God's Word!**
- E. Never stop asking the question, “How might this fuel my faith?” Remember: theology should lead to trust, discernment, worship, and obedience (etc)!
- F. Communicate theological truth appropriately to those around you.

“While many of our [theological] statements come straight from Scripture, many others also go beyond it as we make connections that work out the implications of Scripture’s claims. We proceed knowing that our primary task is not to develop a comprehensive theological system but to think systematically about what God has revealed, discerning what must be true about God, creation and our own lives in light of everything God has said and done. We make our theological claims knowing that, at best, they are provisional placeholders for the ones we will make on the day we see Christ face to face (1 Jn 3:2). As such, our claims take ‘the character of an offering’ as we place them before God in humility and pray that he finds them acceptable and pleasing in his sight. / “All of this means that we ought to become increasingly humble - rather than arrogant - the more we practice theology.”  
- Keith L. Johnson, *Theology as Discipleship*, pp. 160-61

# Reflection Questions

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Belief Matters | A Crash Course in Christian Theology

- ▶ Look at the “working definition” of Christian theology on p. 6. How does this definition compare with how you’ve thought about theology in the past? What emphases stand out in this definition that you don’t want to forget? Explain.
  
- ▶ Four "ingredients" for doing theology well were provided on p. 9: (1) with the whole Bible as our final authority, (2) as part of a community of believers, (3) in a spirit of both confidence and humility, and (4) for the purpose of ever-increasing holiness, worship and obedience. Did any of these stand out to you in a special way? Would you add to or subtract from the list?
  
- ▶ Review the five pictures illustrating why theology is important and what it offers (pp. 10-11). Which of these pictures were most helpful to you? Explain.
  
- ▶ Scan the material from the “Tour of Theology” (pp. 13-36) and answer the following questions:
  - Which topic(s) or section(s) stood out to you the most? Why?
  
  - What’s the danger of neglecting this area of Christian theology?
  
  - How does a robust theology in this area contribute to Christian mission and communion with God?
  
- ▶ How might a healthy appreciation for (and application of!) theology continue taking shape in your life? (See p. 39 if you want some pointers.)
  
- ▶ What practical steps do you need to take, in light of the material that was covered in this course?



## For Further Study

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Belief Matters | A Crash Course in Christian Theology

\_\_\_\_\_. *ESV Study Bible*. Crossway, 2008. (Crossway has also published [2017] an *ESV Systematic Theology Study Bible*.)

Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

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D.A. Carson and Timothy Keller, eds. *The Gospel As Center: Renewing Our Faith and Reforming Our Ministry Practices*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 3rd ed. Ed. by L. Arnold Hustad. Baker Academic, 2015.

Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (edited by Jeff Purswell). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999. (This is an abridgment of Grudem's fuller *Systematic Theology*. For a more popular treatment, see also Wayne Grudem's and Eliot Grudem's *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*.)

Keith L. Johnson, *Theology as Discipleship*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015.

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J.I. Packer. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973.

Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, eds. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd ed. Baker Academic, 2017.

Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology that Makes a Difference*. Brazos, 2019.

Bruce Ware, *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*. Crossway, 2009.

