**Who Needs Theology?**

Lesson #1

1. How this class/small group time is going to work.
2. What groups you are in and where you will meet.
3. \*Reading: “Who needs Theology?” (5 classes) then “Mosaic” (10 classes)
4. We are going to begin right at 7pm.

For those reading:

-Keep reading – don’t get discouraged if you don’t understand everything.

 -Try to read ahead of the class.

 -Read with a highlighter.

 -Set aside time so that each chapter can be read in one sitting.

 (Don’t read in small 10–15-minute stints)

Explain why there will be no note taking in class and that all notes will be posted online with video.

Some of our goals: (i.e., *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*)

1. To be thoroughly biblical and learn how to read the Bible theologically.
2. To learn to articulate the difference between Great Tradition Christianity and its counterfeits/heresy.

-Great Tradition Christianity is that which is believed by all Christians, at all times, and everywhere.

-Particularly defined in the first 4 centuries of the church in the Apostle’s Creed, Nicene Creed and the Canonization of Scripture.

1. To be faithful to (and know) the Great Tradition.
2. To be contemporary in our restatement of what Christian’s believe.
3. To draw the boundaries of The Great Tradition (orthodoxy), which gives us more room than is often allowed for, but at the same time gives us more limits than we often allow for.
4. To see how Christians (of all denominations) can be “of one mind” about the most important matters related to God.
5. To see the importance of a “both/and” tension in many theological subjects. (i.e. see chapter titles in *Mosaic*).

-Heresy is often the overemphasis of one side of a doctrine at the expense of the other side.

1. To develop a more humble *and* a more convicted theology.

-Sometimes Christians can claim to know more than they can (i.e. what happens to babies when they die), or claim to not know, or be able to explain, what it clearer should know (i.e. that Jesus rose from the dead).

1. To grow in Christian maturity by recognizing legitimate diversity and even disagreement within the larger unity of orthodoxy.
2. To learn how to listen and understand an opposing viewpoint and be able to explain it fairly before arguing/debating with it.

 -Understanding is not the same as agreeing.

 -Can you fairly articulate a position in a way that the one holding it could

 say that you have correctly understood them?

1. To learn the importance of convictions and doubts.

 -It is ok to be a *convicted* fence sitter on some issues.

 -It is ok to question beliefs and search for answers.

 -It is ok to read broadly.

1. To learn a *mediating theological perspe*ctive within the broad tradition of evangelical Protestant Christianity.

What is the “broad “Evangelical Protestant Christian” tradition?

Christian – Followers of “the way” / Jesus Christ.

Protestant – (protest/“re”-formation). Those Christians who believed the Roman Catholic

Church had distanced itself from the Bible and the Great Tradition in such

a significant way that they “protested” against it and wanted to “re”-form

it – 1500’s. (There’s been a significant improvement in the relationship between Protestants and Catholics since Vatican II – 1960’s).

Play video - <https://www.nae.org/what-is-an-evangelical/> - What were some themes?

Evangelical – Christian whose major stress is:

 1. Christ-Centered.

 2. A high view of scripture.

 3. Conversion and a life of transformation.

 4. Healthy diversity (key difference between fundamentalists/evangelicals)

 5. Actively sharing the gospel and serving others.

1. To grow closer to God and to each other (greatest commandment) as we learn to *not conform any longer 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.* (Rom. 12:2).

-Having good theology enables us to (Rom. 12:2):

 a) No longer conform.

 b) But be transformed. (how?)

 c) By the renewing of our minds (so that?)

 d) We will be able to know (live) God’s will.

-Changed beliefs lead to transformation (inside-out) whereas simply changing behavior leads to religion.

-A belief is not simply being able to *say* a belief.

-When we truly believe something, it affects the way we live – *James, 1 John*.

Discussion Questions: (Start with introductions).

1. What do you hope to gain out of these classes and discussions?
2. What Christian doctrines do you think you understand the most and which ones do you think you understand the least? Why?
3. What Christian doctrines do you think will be the most interesting and which ones do you think will be the least interesting? Why?
4. Why do you think people get defensive when their views are challenged?
5. How can we learn to discuss and debate rather than attack - and at the same time keep the conversation from becoming superficial?
6. How can we apply these principles to our group discussions?