**Who Needs Theology?**

Class #5

Becoming a (lay) theologian:

1. Requires a heart for God.
2. Requires that we become dissatisfied with our present level of understanding
3. Requires that we are willing to work.
4. Requires that we understand ourselves in accordance with the Christian belief system.
5. Requires that live according to our convictions in the midst of real life.

-A theologian lives with integrity.

-Acting in accordance with one’s beliefs

-Standing for convictions even at great personal cost.

-Christianity integrity is what discipleship is all about.

-A person of integrity is one whose conduct shows forth what God is like.

-They make it easier to believe in God.

**Rewards for engaging in theology**:

1. A deepening awareness and understanding of God.

-God is not glorified by lazy or sloppy thinking.

1. An enriched and enhanced Christian life.
2. An ability to think through (and live) answers to questions that arise in contemporary culture.

-Theology is not a set of pat answers, but a way of thinking towards answers.

1. A belief system to fall back on during periods of spiritual dryness when we cannot *feel* God’s presence.

**Dangers of engaging in theology:**

1. Substituting intellectualism for heartfelt faith.

-Both/and *not either/or.*

2. Pride / arrogance.

3. Periods of doubt and anxiety.

3. The potential loss of your current church affiliation.

4. Being misunderstood by others.

**Important Theological Tools**

Bible

1. A good study Bible in a recent translation such as the NIV or NLT.

2. A recent one-volume commentary.

-Individual book commentaries.

\*Example: *Expositor Bible Commentary*

3. A Bible dictionary, encyclopedia, concordance.

Tradition:

1. A dictionary or encyclopedia of church history and theology.

2. A recent one-volume summary of church history and historical theology.

3. A volume containing the major creeds and confessions of various churches

4. A copy of your own church’s or denomination’s statement of faith.

Contemporary Culture:

1. New sources/periodicals like *Maclains* and *Christianity Today*

2. Movies, shows, social media, blogs

3. Art, science, theater, sports, hobbies.

4. Courses at a local community college or other institutions of higher learning.

**What is *Systematic* Theology?**

-What makes a theology *systematic* is an organizing theme or thread that runs through all of Christian doctrine.

-This transforms our theology out of a jumble of loosely related (and many times contradictory) doctrines/beliefs.

“An integrative motif is the central idea that provides the thematic perspective in light of which the theologian understands all other theological concepts and gives them their relative meaning or value.”

-It’s theme is biblical, theological, historical, and speaks relevantly to popular culture.

Example: \**Created for Community* (Stan Grenz)

-“Community” is the central idea.

-We were created to be in relationship with God and others.

-This is the greatest commandment (Mark 12:29-31).

-Garden of Eden = perfect relations with God and others.

-Sin = broken relationship with God and others.

-Christ = forgiveness and restored relationship with God and others.

-Holy Spirit/Church = How to live in the new community.

Theology: The eternal God is the foundation for community.

-Tri-unity.

-God has eternally expressed himself as love within community.

Anthropology: God created humankind to be the “image of God.”

-Because God is community, we are created for community.

-Sin (“I”/pride/selfishness), however, alienates us from one another and God and creates enmity with God, others, ourselves, and creation.

Christology: Jesus has revealed to us who God is and who we were created to be.

-Christ is the “Image of God”.

-In other words, the perfect reflection of *humanity*

(as well as deity).

-In Christ we find forgiveness and new relationship with God and others, ourselves, and creation.

Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit brings into being God’s design for us (becoming Christ-like – “Image of God”) which is being a people of community/love.

Ecclesiology: Being in community means belonging to God’s people, the community of Christ’s disciples.

Eschatology: The fellowship we now enjoy through the Spirit is only a foretaste of what we will share in eternity.

-As resurrected saints living in a new (resurrected) creation we will enjoy the fullness of relationship with the triune God, with one another, ourselves and creation.

-You can see that this brings unity to our beliefs (and our Bible reading).

-It is a major theme throughout church history/tradition.

-It helps to explain the faith to others.

-And is certainly a relevant and contemporary theme.

-All of the sudden concepts like the *Trinity* are not abstract ideas, but at the core of who God is and what we are created for.

-It gives us a deeper understanding of *love*.

\*Other types of overarching themes in systematic theologies:

Freedom/Liberation Creation/Fall/New Creation

Covenant Law/Gospel

The glory of God The speaking God (Word)

Dispensational Poor/Disenfranchised

Sacramental Reformed

\*John Stott – Theology of the Cross – (Read pp. 11-12) in *The Cross of Christ*

-A lot of these theologies will interweave, challenge, flesh-out, and even seem to (or outright) contradict one another.

-This is the process of developing a Biblical/Christian mind, heart, and action(s).

\*In *The Mosaic* Roger Olson displays a mediating evangelical theology by showing how a healthy theology faithfully upholds the both/and tension of truth’s diversity, whereas unBiblical positions often come about from either/or thinking and alternatives.

-The title “Mosaic” tells us this.

Revelation - Universal and Particular

Scripture - Divine and human words

God - Great and Good

God - Three and One

Creation - Good and Fallen

Providence - Limited and Detailed

Humanity - Good and Estranged

Jesus - God and Man

Salvation - Objective and Subjective

Salvation - Gift and Task

Holy Spirit -

Church - Visible and Invisible

Afterlife - Continuity and Discontinuity

God’s Kingdom - Already and Not Yet

-You can see this mediating approach even driving the books Oslon writes.

\**How to be an Evangelical without Being Conservative*

\**Against Liberal Theology.*

***Conclusion***

-Theology moves us beyond the level of knowledge to the higher level of reflection.

-This is important.

-It is the “why” questions.

-This should not be engaged alone.

-Converse with other concerned Christians and leaders about your discoveries. (living, dead, through books, interpersonally, sermons, ect)

-We learn from each other.

-Others can caution us away from potentially dangerous paths.

-Theology is crucial to the entire task of living as a Christian in both the church and the world.

-Living involves questioning.

-Living as a Christian involves asking and attempting to answer questions about God and the world.

-Thus living as a Christian involves doing theology.

1. Are there any tools of theology (besides a television) that you think you may actually purchase? (Which ones? Why?)
2. How did seeing Olson/Grenz theology of community help you see continuity and wholeness to the Bible?
3. What are themes/ideas you think you would be interested in studying in the Bible in this kind of fashion?
4. Is there a book of the Bible that you are interested in studying in a deeper and more systematic manner with some of the tools of theology? (Which one? Why?)
5. In the (tri)alogue of scripture, heritage/tradition, and contemporary culture, which of the three do you feel you know the least about? What are some things you would like to do to learn more in this area?
6. When you hear that the best way to learn is by teaching others, what ways could you be more actively involved in teaching the Bible to others?