



# Fuel for Faith

An Important Class about  
Christian Theology

© Tim Wiebe 2012, permissions pending

# Fuel for Faith

---

an introduction to Christian theology

Session #1	First Things First
Session #2	God and His Word
Session #3	Humanity and Sin
Session #4	Christ and His Work
Session #5	The Holy Spirit and Spirituality
Session #6	The Church
Session #7	The End of the World as We Know It
Session #8	Statement of Faith: A closer look On Becoming Theologians



# (session 1)



# **Prolegomena: First things first**

---

## **I. Before we jump in... A few preliminaries to get us started**

A. You are in just as much \_\_\_\_\_ of the class as I am...almost

B. The success of our time together depends on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

C. This class won't answer all your questions, but here's what it will do:

1.

2.



D. Keep in mind what we're studying

1.

2.

E. This class requires \_\_\_\_\_.

## II. First things first

A. Introduction: the word "theology"...

B. Getting on the same page regarding \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_:

i. The definition of theology that we'll work from in this  
class is this: Christian theology \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

a)

b)

c)

Systematic theology relies on careful exegesis of Scripture, on historical theology and church history, on practical theology and biblical theology. "Yet it is systematic theology that puts all these themes together in order to show their logical connections." Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* pp. 28-29.

➡ To define theology in another (perhaps better?) way:

ii. Some other definitions:

- "...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, *A Pocket Guide to New Testament Theology* p. 5).
- 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 in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* p. 773)
- "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).

" 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."

C. Getting on the same page regarding \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_:

i. The importance of doing theology: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

"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. To believe in the popular religion of modern England (or America) is retrogression – like believing the earth is flat." (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

ii. The importance of doing theology **WELL**: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_!

**Four big ingredients for doing theology well:**

a) With \_\_\_\_\_.

b) As \_\_\_\_\_.

"In theology we are bound by what God has said and are not free to indulge our own speculations, which may be right or wrong. Christian theology, accordingly, has a normative or binding quality. It is not simply a descriptive statement of what Christians believe; it expresses what Christians *ought* to believe on the basis of God's revelation" (Marshall, *New Testament Theology* 6).

c) In \_\_\_\_\_.

- Confidence
- Humility
- Majoring on the majors

"...there is a dark side to theology. I see it everyday....The theologically dangerous have no grace....What should have been the path toward humility turns into the path of arrogance....Correct theology becomes a virtues that swallows up virtues of tenderness, grace, respect, and kindness...." Michael Patton blog post: "The Dark Side of Theology"

d) For \_\_\_\_\_.

- Theology as \_\_\_\_\_.

"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." (Marshall, *New Testament Theology* 8-9)

- Theology as a \_\_\_\_\_.

# A look ahead at the course

Session #1	First Things First (prolegomena)
Session #2	God and His Word (theology proper & bibliology)
Session #3	Humanity and Sin (anthropology & hamartiology)
Session #4	Christ and His Work (Christology & soteriology)
Session #5	The Holy Spirit and Spirituality (pneumatology & sanctification)
Session #6	The Church (ecclesiology)
Session #7	The End of the World as We Know It (eschatology)
Session #8	(1) Statement of Faith: A closer look (2) On Becoming Theologians

# Reflection questions

---

## Session #1: First things first

- ➔ In this session, the statement was made that "Theology is important because everyone is a theologian and operates under certain beliefs about God, sin, the purpose and end of humanity, etc..." In other words, *everyone* does theology in that everyone has thoughts – whether intentionally formulated or not – about God and the world. Consider how the world approaches some of the “big” questions of life – what are some competing beliefs about...
  - ...who God is?
  - ...how we are saved?
  - ...what's wrong with the world?
  - ...what the purpose of life is?
  
- ➔ In light of the many possible "theologies" out there, why is studying Christian theology *well* so important?

---

## reflection questions, cont'd

- ➔ Four "ingredients" for doing theology well were provided: (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?
  
- ➔ How should theology be "fuel for faith"? As you examine your own thoughts and actions, does Christian theology – your Scripturally-informed beliefs – play a role in your everyday worship and faith-driven obedience to God? How can this class help you toward that end?
  
- ➔ How has your theology impacted any major decisions or events in your life?
  
- ➔ What questions or concerns are on your mind that require "theological attention"? (i.e. how might theology apply to a situation you are in the middle of right now?)

## for further study

---

Session #1: First things first

Anders, Max. *God: Knowing Our Creator*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995.

**Bock, Darrell. *Purpose-Directed Theology: Getting Our Priorities Right in Evangelical Controversies*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.**

Clark, David K. *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2003.

**Grudem, Wayne. *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.**

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim's on the Way*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

Marshall, I. Howard. *A Pocket Guide to New Testament Theology*. Located online at [www.biblicaltraining.org](http://www.biblicaltraining.org).

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

