

## *“Why the Study of “Theology” is Central to the Christian and to the Local Church”*

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The title of this short read presupposes that some within the church would doubt the place of theological thinking for the individual and for the community of faith. Some see its significance but doubt its place as primary in the defining of the individual and the community of faith. So why should the study of theology be central to the individual and to the local church? That is the question and it is my desire to set forth the reasons as to why thinking theological is fundamental to the individual and to the local church. I would like to simply offer you four thoughts to consider.

**First**, let us begin by defining the word theology and then what it means in the context of the question. The word “theology” is a compound of two Greek words: theos which literally means “God,” and logos which literally means “speech or expression” (John 1:1; Heb 1:1-3). Thus, theo-logia means a “speech or discourse upon the subject of God.” This is a very simple definition for so vast a subject as the infinite and eternal triune God. But the point is that the theological study of God will include His person, His works, and His ways. So our theological study will encompass both the immaterial and material universe, and God's relationship to both. <http://www.calvarysbdc.com/terms.htm#T>

Consequently, your “theology” consists of your thoughts about the person, works, and words of God. Your observations or conclusions might be derived from many things, but ultimately the only true and unwavering resource for concluding on God will come from the Word of God.

**Second**, what you think will form a corpus or body of information. This body of information is your system for understanding the experiences of your life and the world around you. This system, or grid, is the filter through which all of your experiences and thoughts will pass. If your theology about God and His works are based on your experiences from life, then they will be highly subjective and changeable. The reason for this is that your experiences are never consistent and your experiences are uniquely yours. If your theology about God and His works are based on your study of the Bible, then your experiences will have little impact on its stability. In fact, it will be your theology that helps you interpret your experiences. Theology will help you “make sense” of life.

**Third**, because theology is the study of God as He makes Himself known through subjective creation and objective revelation, it is an endless and timeless pursuit. No one has a perfect or exhaustive theology. Theological study and thinking produces humility, teach-ability, and charity toward those who differ. It is impossible for any one of us to know perfectly or exhaustively everything there is to know about God, His

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works and words. Since this is true there should always be a spirit of tolerance toward those who differ in their theology.

**Fourth**, theology is the bedrock on which life is lived and community is formed. Although there is great flexibility and diversity within the body of Christ there is also common threads of truth that bind all believers together. Theology is the thread that holds the garment of shared experiences together. Because we hold certain truths in common we can share experiences and comfort one another through life. If theology does not stay as the thread that binds us together, then it will be our experiences and our experiences are the shifting sands of instability.

As believers, what we believe about who God is, what He has done, and who His people are in Him forms the thread that holds us together in our varied experiences. It is my ongoing passion that we might be people who are deeply in love with God, and cultivate that love by the systematic and intentional study of His word and works. May the Holy Spirit continue to bind our hearts together in our common pursuit of our uncommon Savior.