

Introductory Issues in Theology

The Westminster Confession and the Puritan's Catechism and many others present a statement of faith that has been traditionally said in one form or another. In his book, **DESIRING GOD**, subtitle **MEDITATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN HEDONIST**, John Piper writes, "You might turn the world on its head by changing one word in your creed. The long-standing tradition says,

The chief end of man is to glorify God

AND

Enjoy him forever.

He suggests changing that creed to,

The chief end of man is to glorify God

BY

Enjoying him forever.

How can one enjoy God if one does not know God? Therefore, we chose this study based on Pastor David Wooten's course, **KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE**. Pastor Dave was then the Executive Pastor at Riverbend and after taking many of the courses offer there, he gave me permission to use any and all material from not only his courses, but any Riverbend course. **KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE** has a subtitle of [An Introduction to Systematic Theology](#). As I just asked, "How can one enjoy God if one does not know God?" Theology in its most simple definition means **knowing God**.

Since taking Pastor David's course as well as many other's, I have been blessed to purchase and use Logos Bible Software, and now have access to many Bible Translations, Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons and over 20,000 references. While this study will be based on that course, I believe it will be enhanced by these aides. The main thing is that all of us, including me, should get to know God and His three persons with our main theme in mind so that we will glorify "**God and enjoy Him forever and ever,**" Amen.

[Does Doctrine Matter?](#) The greatest pursuit in life is the **Knowledge of the Lord**.

Doctrine is a set of accepted beliefs held by a group. In religion, it is the set of true beliefs that define the parameters of that belief system. Hence, there is true doctrine and false doctrine compared to each belief set. In Christianity, for example, a true biblical doctrine is that there is only one God in all existence (Isaiah 43:10; 44:6, 8). A false doctrine is that there is more than one God in all existence.

Isaiah 43:10, 44:6 , 8

Matthew 15:9 (NKJV) Jesus Himself tells us doctrine does matter.

9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

2 Timothy 4:3–4 (NKJV)

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

[General Revelation](#)

“It is God’s witness to all men about Himself through creation, history (providence) and the conscience of man.” ***General Revelation is not enough to save but is enough to condemn.***

[Creation](#)

Psalm 19:1–3 (NKJV)

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. 2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard.

Romans 1:18–21 (NKJV)

God’s Wrath on Unrighteousness 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

[History \(Providence\)](#)

Matthew 5:45b (NKJV)

45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Acts 14:15b–17 (NKJV)

15b the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, 16 who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

Daniel 2:21 (NKJV)

21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.

Conscience

Romans 1:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

Romans 2:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.

General revelation provides

- 1. common ground with unbelievers**
- 2. foundation for pre-evangelism**
- 3. background for special revelation.**

People throughout history show that even though they do not necessarily know God or about God, have a general revelation concerning right and wrong. They feel that there is a higher power, which is one of the reasons they have developed Gods of their own, i.e. Sun, Moon, etc. Gods.

Theme Verse for This Study:

Jeremiah 9:23–24 (NKJV)

²³ Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; ²⁴ But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the LORD.

Knowing God should be a life-long pursuit.

Knowing God requires study, work, and meditation.

YOU **must** become a Theologian, which is one who studies Theology.

“Theology” is the **Study of God**

“Theos” is Greek for **God**

“logos” is Greek for **Word, or knowledge about, discourse or response.**

A theologian is one who has a true knowledge of God.

You can be a theologian without being **saved**.

Look at Satan for example. He knows the Scriptures forward and backwards and, in every language, known to man. He like many preachers today, twists, distort, leave out or add to the Scriptures to meet their agenda.

You cannot be saved without being a **Theologian**.

What do I mean by that? If you are saved, you must know God. That is what a Theologian is – he or she knows God, because he studies God. There are things about God that we are not to know, but the 66 books of the Canon reveal what he does want us to know.

Deuteronomy 29:29 (NKJV)

29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Benefits of Studying Theology

Theology gets you into the **Bible**

2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Theology **will nourish** your soul

Sharing theology with others should be part of your **ministry**.

1 Timothy 4:6 (NKJV)

6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

Evangelism is a topic that many people feel afraid of and feel they are not capable of doing. You don't necessarily need to be the type of evangelist that goes house to house, but knowing what you believe, God will put people in your path that you may share the Gospel truth with and therefore you are evangelizing, or ministering to them.

Theology protects us against **error**.

Colossians 2:6–8 (NKJV)

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Philosophy is the branch of knowledge that deals with the investigation and understanding of the concepts of knowledge, being, and behavior. The three main branches of philosophy are natural philosophy, moral philosophy, and metaphysical philosophy. It is the love of and pursuit of knowledge using critical thinking.

Jude 3 (NKJV)

³ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

We must guard against error through Theology. Listening to preachers like Joel Osteen for example. He is a nice guy, charming and highly motivational. But is he preaching the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Many of the televangelist are right there with Joel, preaching part truths, which often turn to lies. **A partial truth is a lie!**

Theology is an essential ***foundation***

Romans 1:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—

Times of life when a foundation is all important:

- 1. Times of *Temptation***
- 2. Times of *Transition***
- 3. Times of *Tension***
- 4. Times of *Tragedy***

Life without a foundation is ***a life like little children***

Ephesians 4:13–16 (NKJV)

¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Life with a foundation, however, is like the man in:

Matthew 7:24–25 (NKJV)

²⁴ “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

We must remember that it is the truth that sets us free.

John 8:32 (NKJV)

32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

There is bondage in false doctrine.

Truth is one of the two necessary ingredients for authentic **Worship**.

In his class called, **SONGWRITING AT RIVERBEND**, Pastor Rick Cobb says, "Theology learned that does not express itself in enthusiastic and passionate praise, is theology not truly understood. Amateur theologians that must endure the "preliminaries" (the worship of God) in order to get to the preaching, have not been properly impacted by the teaching."

Psalm 139 (NKJV)

PSALM 139 God's Perfect Knowledge of Man For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. ¹ O LORD, You have searched me and known me. ² You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. ³ You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. ⁵ You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. ⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; ¹² Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You. ¹³ For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. ¹⁷ How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! ¹⁸ If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. ¹⁹ Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men. ²⁰ For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain. ²¹ Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? ²² I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies. ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; ²⁴ And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

We can only live rightly if we **think** rightly.

Proverbs 23:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ **Do not eat the bread of a miser, Nor desire his delicacies;** ⁷ **For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. “Eat and drink!” he says to you, But his heart is not with you.**

Wrong thinking leads to wrong actions. The proverb we just read, shows a miser that does not really want to serve you. He is a miser thinking only of the cost of the food, while hypocritically pretending generosity.

The Purpose Of Theology

The purpose of theology is to get us to think and live **Biblically**.

We must develop a Biblical worldview. The Biblical worldview is what we call **Theism**.

The Bible commands us to **study** the truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

It commands us to **live** the truth.

Hebrews 13:9 (NKJV)

⁹ **Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.**

We are commanded to **defend** the truth.

There are 8 Worldviews

Atheism	A world without God
Pantheism	The world is God
Deism	A world that was made by God and left alone
Finite godism	World with a finite God
Pantheism	A world in God, “Force be with you.” New Age Theory
Polytheism	Many gods
Humanism	Man is God
Theism	The world plus an infinite God

The study of theology ought to elicit a **heart response**.

The purpose of theology is to help us think accurately about God, His World and His Works and His Words.

The study of theology must be **passionate**.

Psalms 42:1 (NKJV)

¹ **As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.**

Matthew 5:6 (NKJV)

⁶ **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**

The study of theology *glorifies* God.

John Piper: “**God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him.**”

There are three kinds of studying theology:

Historical Theology – is the study of the historical development of doctrine as recorded in the writings of individuals and church councils.

Biblical Theology – Study that investigates the truth about God and the universe as in the Bible, wherein God is progressively revealed.

Systematic Theology – The collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, showing, and defending of all facts from any & every source concerning God and His works.

Biblical Theology Branch of theological inquiry devoted to identifying distinctive themes in various sections of the Bible (e.g., the OT or the writings of the apostle Paul), tracing them from one section to another, and discovering any overall unifying theme that draws the whole Bible together.

The task of the biblical theologian is thus (1) to discern the particular emphases of individual writers (such as the social justice of Amos or human love in the Song of Solomon); (2) to compare and contrast treatments by different writers of a single theme (e.g., the different approaches to salvation in John’s Gospel and Hebrews); and (3) to attempt to integrate into a single comprehensive whole all the various emphases of the biblical writers.

Biblical theology studies in detail the progressive self-revelation of God in Scripture. It focuses on the meaning of a biblical passage in the life situation at the time of its writing, rather than on its meaning or application today.

Relation to Other Disciplines.

Systematic Theology. Biblical theology provides the foundation on which systematic theology builds. Biblical theology is descriptive: it describes the message of each biblical writer as well as the overall message of Scripture. Systematic theology then restates or reshapes the material collected by biblical theology, breaking it up into logical categories and integrating those categories into a comprehensive formulation of church teaching. For example, biblical theology notes that, according to the Gospel of John, eternal life is a present possession, which gives a believer security; on the other hand, according to Hebrews, eternal life is a future attainment, which gives a believer the responsibility of persevering.

A biblical theologian would point out that those two teachings concerning eternal life are complementary aspects of a single truth: salvation entails both security and responsibility. A systematic theologian takes such results and integrates them into a more comprehensive doctrine of salvation, discussing security and responsibility in relation to election, justification, regeneration, and sanctification. The logical structure of systematic theology is usually taken from modern thought-patterns; hence, by stating in modern terms “what the Bible means now,” systematic theology becomes a bridge between “what it meant then” (the task of biblical theology) and “how it applies” (the task of homiletical theology, the study of the composition and delivery of a sermon).

Exegesis. The basis of biblical theology is “exegesis,” a term derived from two Greek words meaning “to think or infer out of.” As a discipline, exegesis examines biblical passages and “thinks out” their meaning on the basis of grammar (the meaning of the language and its relationship to thought) and historical considerations (the meaning of each passage in light of the culture of that day). A biblical

theologian compiles such exegetical results and seeks to discover any underlying unity. Biblical theology thus stands between exegesis and systematic theology.

Historical Theology. A separate discipline studies the development of systematic theology throughout the history of the church. One might expect biblical theology, concerned only with the emphases of the biblical writers themselves, to be far removed from the debates and interpretations of later times. Historical theology, however, clarifies how different periods of church history understood various biblical teachings, and why. For example, a scholar investigating the controversy over God's sovereignty and human freedom might trace the doctrinal debate from the Augustine-Pelagius controversy of the early church through the Calvinist-Arminian debates of the post-Reformation period, to the present.

Appreciating the different turns such controversy took historically and how it affected the way related doctrines were expressed from one period to the next can help a biblical theologian gain perspective on the meaning of the biblical text. Historical theology, especially the study of the early church fathers, provides an excellent control against reading later ideas into the pages of Scripture.

Homiletical Theology. The final step of the theological process is application of biblical truth to the contemporary situation. Homiletical theology builds on the other theological disciplines, interpreting the exegetical data as organized by biblical and systematic theology and as reviewed by historical theology. Interpreters of the Bible must first understand its meaning in the biblical world before deciding how that meaning should be expressed today in preaching and in ethical decision-making.¹

¹ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (pp. 339–340). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.