



DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT MONTH

Theology 1: Knowing God

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The Revelation of God

Week 1 || January 7, 2024

CLASS GOALS

1. To Study God and to know Him. (Jer. 9:23-24)
 - Theology is Relational
2. To Apply our knowledge of God specifically to our lives.
 - Theology is Transformational.
3. To apply our knowledge of God in specific ways to the Mission of Christ's Church.
 - Theology is Missional.

Christ's Church Mission Statement

Christ's Church exists to glorify God by making more and better disciples of Jesus Christ, through intentional relationships.

THEOLOGY

1. What is Theology?

- a. Theology is the doctrine or study of God.

"Theology in a Christian context is a discipline of study that seeks to understand the God revealed in the Bible and to provide a Christian understanding of reality."

- Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 17.

- b. Theology is for everyone.
 - "Everyone is a Theologian" — R.C. Sproul

- c. Everyone has a theology.
- All of life is theological

“Everyone has commitments to a certain way of seeing life. Some people call this a worldview. Whatever the label, it is a vision about life, what it is, how it works. This vision of life may be wise or foolish. People may or may not be self-conscious about their vision of life. But everyone possesses such a vision.”

- Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, p. 16.

- d. Your theology shapes your worldview.
- Every vision of life (or worldview) is based on a person’s theology.
 - What is a worldview?

“A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provide the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”

- James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, p. 6.

- Internal frame of reference
- We need true truth—absolute truth (not relative truth)
 - Absolute truth is revealed to us from God in His Word (Ps. 119:160; John 17:17)

- e. So... *What’s in your Theology?*

- Our goal should be to have the worldview that Jesus has

“Fallen human beings enter this world wrong. We do not look at ourselves correctly, we do not view God correctly, we do not understand the way to be truly happy, we are ignorant of where all human history is heading, and we do not have the wisdom that makes life work well. And so on. The Christian life—our growth [and transformation] in Christ—is nothing other than the lifelong deconstruction of what we naturally think and assume [our faulty worldview], and the reconstruction of truth through the Bible.”

- Dane Ortlund, *Deeper*, p. 145.

- f. The need for theology.
- The basic questions of life.....
 - Who is God?

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

- A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 1.

2. Knowing God.

- a. Some Prerequisite Qualifications
- No study of God can be considered comprehensive
 - i. Our minds are limited
 - ii. Our minds do not function properly
(The noetic effect of sin)
 - iii. Our access to knowledge is limited (Deut. 29:29)

- b. The knowability of God.
- God can be known (John 14:7; 17:3; 1 John 5:20)
 - God wants to be found (Jer. 29:13)

“God is truly knowable but not exhaustively comprehensible.”

- John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 145

- c. The incomprehensibility of God.
- The human mind cannot know everything about God
(Ps. 145:3; Job 11:7; Rom. 11:33)
 - The incomprehensibility of God is not intended to repel you from him
 - It's meant to draw you to Him
- d. The existence of God.
- The Bible never attempts to prove the God exists.
 - The Bible begins from the premise that God exists.
(Gen. 1:1)

REVELATION

1. What is Revelation?

- a. Revelation is the act of disclosing or making known something what was previously and otherwise unknown or unknowable.
 - Greek term *apokálypsis*: To uncover or unveil.

“Revelation is God’s disclosure to [humanity], in which He reveals truth about Himself that [human beings] would not otherwise know.”

- Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 186.

2. General Revelation

- a. Universal.
 - It is a revelation of God that is available to everyone, and everyone can see it.
 - Obvious evidence and proof of God’s existence.
- b. General revelation in creation.
 - God reveals himself through what He has made—His works (Rom 1:20)
 - The creation “shouts” the existence of God (Ps. 19:1-6; Job. 12:7-10)

“God is able to get the essential message across without the use of a single verbal utterance. Through non-verbal communication, people from all cultures and all languages have the capacity to understand that Almighty God exists in all of His weighty importance.”

- John MacArthur, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, p. 41.

- c. General revelation in the human conscience.
 - All of humanity has an innate understanding that “God exists” build into them (Rom. 1:19; 2:14-15)
- d. General revelation is revealed.
 - Revelation is not something you discover.
 - Revelation is plainly obvious.

- e. The effects of general revelation.
- If accepted: A drive to find and know the God who is revealed (Ps. 111:2-3)
 - **May** result in salvation, **if** people find God's Special Revelation
 - If rejected: Condemnation.
 - No legitimate excuses (Rom. 1:20)
 - The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." (Ps. 14:1a)

3. Special Revelation

- a. What is the difference between general and special revelation?

"General Revelation points to a higher power, while special revelation personally introduces this higher power as the triune God of Scripture, who created the world and all that is in it...and provided the only Redeemer in the Lord Jesus Christ."

- John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 58.

- b. Special revelation provides the answers to life's basic questions.

- c. What makes special revelation "special?"

- i. Its audience is limited.

- Divine election

- ii. Its purpose is special.

- The need and way of salvation

- iii. Its scope is limited.

- God's living Word – His Son.
(John 1:1, 14; 5:19; 14:7-9; 1 Tim. 3:16b)
- God's spoken Word.
 - Jesus Christ
 - The apostles and the prophets
 - Angels
 - Theophanies
 - Some visions and dreams
 - Other

Special revelation includes all of the various ways that God has used to communicate His message (or His will), **which have been codified and recorded for us in the Bible.**

Recommended Resources:

Gordon Fee, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, 1993

Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 2014

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 2017

Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013

Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 1999

Peter Jeffery, *Bite Size Theology*, 2014

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 2018

Small Group Discussion Questions:

- 1) In what ways have you struggled with studying and understanding theology?
What has been helpful for you in overcoming those struggles?
- 2) Why is sanctifying our worldview with special revelation so important?
(Hint: Consider Colossians 2:8)
- 3) Do you struggle with the tension between the knowability of God and the incomprehensibility of God? If so, in what ways?
In what ways do you find the incomprehensibility of God fascinating / mesmerizing?
- 4) What have been some of the specific aspects of God's creation (general revelation) that you have personally marveled over, and been able to see the revelation of God's existence?
- 5) Consider the various cultures and religions throughout human history and in the world today.
 - How does this support the reality of general revelation?
 - How does knowing that people cannot be saved through general revelation change your view on the significance and importance of evangelism?
 - How does the fact that people are in fact looking for "the God who is revealed" encourage you for the purpose sharing special revelation?
- 6) How does the revelation of God (general and special) help your understanding of theology (knowing God)? Think in terms of:
 - 1) Relational – Knowing God personally.
 - 2) Transformational – Growing and changing in Christlikeness?
 - 3) Missional – Making more and better disciples through intentional relationships?