

Theology 1
An Introduction to Theology
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Christian theology seeks to understand the God revealed in the Bible and to provide a Christian understanding of God's creation, particularly human beings and their condition, and God's redemptive work. With Scripture as its starting point, theology is most effectively developed by following a definite methodology.

The Nature of Theology

- Theology is **the study of various doctrines**. Doctrine deals with general or timeless truths about God and the rest of reality.
- Characteristics of Christian Theology
 - **Biblical** – Primary content is taken from the Old and New Testaments
 - **Systematic** – Comprehensive in nature, not just a look at separate Bible books
 - Done in the **Context** of Human Culture – Theology is not developed in a vacuum
 - **Contemporary** – Timeless truths restated in a way that are understandable to people who are living today
 - **Practical** – Theology should be studied in order that it will be applied
- Points of Study for Christian Theology
 - **Natural Theology** – Creation
 - **Tradition** – Those things believed and taught in the past & the present
 - **Experience** – The religious experience of a Christian
 - **Scripture** – All sources of Christian theology are subject to the Bible

The Method of Theology

- Theological method often incorporates each of the following:
 - **Collection** of the biblical materials on a given subject
 - **Unification** of the biblical materials on that subject
 - **Analysis** of the meaning of biblical teaching
 - **Examination** of historical treatments of the doctrine
 - **Identification** of the essence of the doctrine, wherever it may appear
 - **Illumination** from sources beyond the Bible (commentaries, etc.)
 - **Contemporary** expression of the doctrine
 - **Development** of a theological theme (patristic theology, reformation, etc.)
 - **Stratification** of the theological topics (doctrinal triage) – distinguishing between primary and secondary doctrines
 - **First-order** doctrines – Deity of Christ, inerrancy of Scripture, etc.
 - **Second-order** doctrines – Finer points of the doctrine of salvation
 - **Third-order** doctrines – Millennial views, Bible translations, etc.

The Purpose of Theology – To Know God, To Love God, To Serve God, & To Share God