



# **LEARNING TO THINK THEOLOGICALLY**

A Practical Guide Sheet





# Thinking Theologically: A Definition

The reflective process whereby we discern how to live our daily lives, do ministry and mission, and engage the culture around us in a way that is faithful to scripture.

Many Christians think of theology as the exclusive domain of scholars and pastors—dry, boring and irrelevant to the practical concerns of everyday life and ministry. But in reality, every Christian is a theologian, because every Christian knows, thinks and speaks about God. That's what theology means.

In Greek, it's a word (logos) about God (theos). In other words, it's the study of God. Theology has to do with what we believe about God, and really, what we believe about everything in light of God's revelation in scripture and in Jesus. Therefore, theology has tremendous implications for the mission of the church and our daily lives.

If what we believe about God and his purposes for us and the world is inconsistent with what Bible reveals them to be in Christ, we'll end up living and ministering in ways that are out of alignment with who God actually is, and what he actually intends.


So it's not a question of whether or not we do theology. Theology is inevitable. Rather, it's a question of whether or not we do good, scriptural, Jesus-centred theology.

The good news is, you don't need to go to Bible school or seminary or get a PhD in theology to learn to think theologically (although if God calls you to do so, go for it!).

It does mean that you're becoming someone who:

- Is a student of the scriptures
- Understands that all scripture points to Jesus, who is the ultimate revelation of God (Luke 24:27; John 14:9; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 1:19; Hebrews 1:3, etc.)
- Grasps that God's overarching plan is to restore all creation in and through Christ (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:15-20; Revelation 21:5)
- Learns how to ask good questions about how scripture intersects with and informs daily life, church ministry, and mission in our cultural context.
- Makes use of good resources to expand your capacity for theological reflection (books, online resources, podcasts, conferences, etc.)
- Engages in constructive and prayerful dialogue with other Christians about such matters.

Don't let that list overwhelm you! It's not like you have to do it all at once. It just gives you an idea of some of key aspects involved in the ongoing journey of learning to think theologically. Below are some selected resources to help you in that journey.



# Selected Resources to Help You Grow in Thinking Theologically

*\*Click titles to access resource*

## **WHY THEOLOGY MATTERS**

*By Jeremy Treat*

A 30-minute video that discusses the fact that what we believe about God will affect every aspect of our lives.

## **THE BIBLE PROJECT**

If you want to grow in understanding the Bible like you never have before, here's an incredible online resource. Combines excellent biblical scholarship in accessible language with fantastic animated illustrations. There are word studies, theme studies, character studies, and animated videos with overviews of every book of the Bible. The Bible Project's Read Scripture app allows you to read through the Bible in a year as you view videos that give you a concise, insightful overview of what you're reading. Also, check out the great podcasts from The Bible Project's Tim Mackie.

## **THEOLOGY FOR THE COMMUNITY OF GOD**

*By Stanley Grenz*

If you're up for a longer but excellent read, this book offers a full systematic theology covering all major Christian doctrines in an accessibly-written way. (You'll save money if you get the Kindle version.)

## **KINGDOM COME: HOW JESUS WANTS TO CHANGE THE WORLD**

*By Allen Wakabayashi*

Filled with clear biblical insights, this book explains what God is up to right now: transforming the entire world and making things right. Reading it can revolutionize how you live out your faith, how you think about your world and how you explain the good news about Jesus.

## **SURPRISED BY HOPE: RETHINKING HEAVEN, THE RESURRECTION, AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

*By N.T. Wright*

In this influential book, one of the world's leading New Testament scholars tackles the biblical question of what happens after we die and shows how most Christians get it wrong. Ultimately speaking, we do not "go to" heaven; we are resurrected and heaven comes down to earth— a difference that makes all of the difference to how we live on earth here and now.

## **ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT: PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL MULTIRACIAL CHURCHES**

*By George Yancey*

The apostle Paul cast a vision of one body where Jew and Gentile would worship together in unity. The Revelation to John likewise foreshadows an eternal future where all nations will join together at the throne of the Lamb. Sadly, Christianity has not often lived up to this ideal. But in the early decades of this millennium, hopeful signs of change are emerging.