



WHAT IS THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Theological Reflection aims to discover the Timeless Gospel Truth that each text is unpacking.

Theological Reflection is the practice of placing a particular text into God's Big Story that is being unfolded throughout the Word of God.

Theological Reflection then leads to a maturing Biblical Theology as you consistently strive to place each text in God's purpose & plan for all things.

WHY IS THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION NECESSARY

A. A BIG GOD – theological reflection connects the truth of your particular text with God's character & God's promises as revealed in the rest of the Word.

Acts 28:23 - When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

B. A BIG GOSPEL – theological reflection enables you to see God's grand gospel story being developed and unpacked throughout the entirety of the Bible.

1 Peter 1:10-12 - Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Luke 24:25-27 - And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

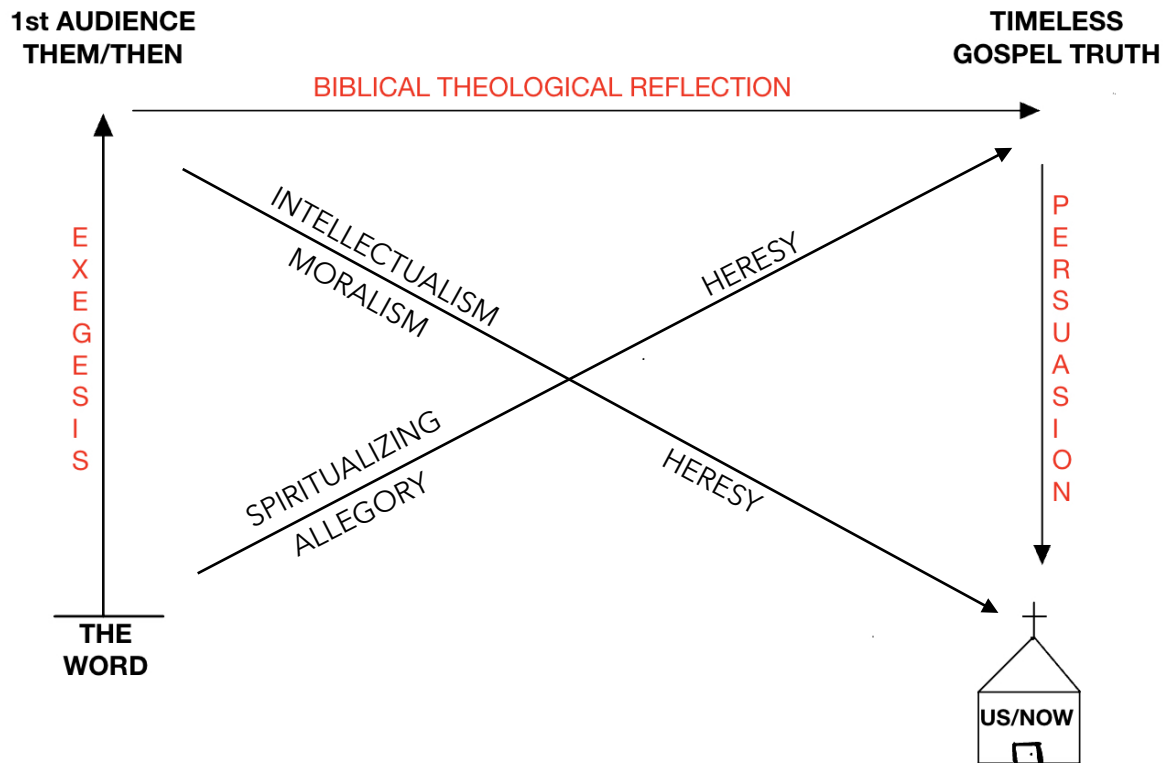
C. A MATURING FAITH – theological reflection cultivates a maturing faith as the overarching themes and storylines of the Bible begin to come into greater focus.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 - But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from



childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF NOT DOING THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION



DANGER #1: Intellectualism – when you study & teach the Bible simply to know history, doctrine, or truth without connecting it to who God is & what God requires.

DANGER #2: Moralism – when you move directly from the meaning of the text (the them/then) to your audience today (the us/now) it will always lead to a moralistic & duty driven faith.

DANGER #3: Heresy – making an entire theological grid or position off of one or a few selected texts is a pathway to heresy.

TABLE DISCUSSION: Read Deuteronomy 14:22. In your Christian experience, how has the tithe been intellectualized or moralized (by you personally or by your particular Christian community)?

TABLE DISCUSSION: How would engaging in Theological Reflection affect your understanding of the tithe for God's people today?



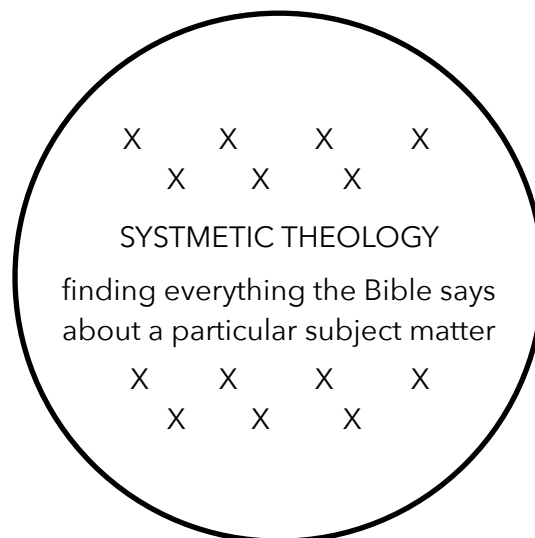
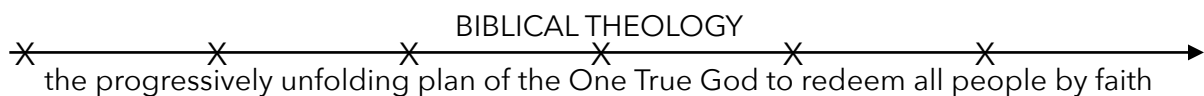
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION CULTIVATES A ROBUST BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

#1: AUTHORIAL INTENT: Once you have carefully & prayerfully observed the meaning of your particular text, Theological Reflection begins to connect the dots with the rest of the Bible.

#2: UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION: Once you have carefully & prayerfully observed your particular text, Theological Reflection enables you to begin connecting the individual pieces that make up the whole.

WARNING: It's crucial that you don't move away from the meaning of the text in your desire to connect it to the whole. We must never flat-line the unique contribution of each individual text in our desire to connect it to the whole.

#3: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: The careful analysis and synthesis of the major themes and movements of the Word of God – looking particularly at who God is and how God is at work to rescue, redeem, and restore all people.





PRACTICING THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: Sacrifice & Atonement from the Book of Genesis

GENESIS 3:15 & 20 – the snake-crushing promise + the covering of Adam & Eve through the death of an animal.

GENESIS 4:3-5 – Due to human sinfulness, a system of sacrifices was already place by Genesis 4 & these sacrifices could either please God or not please God.

GENESIS 8:20 – after God rains down judgment on the earth, Noah offers a sacrifice that pleases the Lord.

GENESIS 22:9-14 – God challenges Abraham to sacrifice his only son of the promise but then God provides a substitute sacrifice

Clearly the ideas of sacrifice & atonement just continue to get more rich and complete as you progress through the Word – which is the nature of Biblical Theology. Biblical Theology is committed to seeing the progression of a particular theme or promise in the progressive revelation of Gods' Word.

SEEING THE BIBLE AS A UNIFIED WHOLE

Even though the Word of God is comprised of 66 different books, written by 40+ different human authors – it is unified whole – one grand story. There is a strong connective tissue that runs throughout the entirety of the Bible – a grand story composed of many sub-plots and short-stories. Whereas each individual text must be rightly studied (i.e. exegesis of each passage in the Bible), each text must then be placed in the overarching story that God is unfolding throughout the pages of the Word. As we do careful exegetical work in each text and as we strive to place the truth of that text in its appropriate place in God's Gospel Story – we develop a rich and wonderful *biblical theology* through the practice theological reflection.

GOD'S GOSPEL STORY

A story that begins in the Garden of Eden – a perfect God, dwelling in a perfect place, with a perfect people (Genesis 1-2). Sin enters the picture (Genesis 3:1-8), this perfect God can no longer dwell with an imperfect people (Genesis 3:23-24). However, God immediately promises a gospel plan – a plan through which all people will be able to be right with God again by faith (Genesis 3:15). *The rest of the Bible is the unfolding of God's gospel-story.* Promise by promise (Genesis 12:1-3). Sin by sin. Covenant by covenant (Genesis 17:1-8). Deliverance by Deliverance. God's gospel story is marching on. The culmination of this gospel story is when the Messiah bursts onto the scene. A messiah who fulfills all



righteousness, dies in the place of sinners, rises from the grave, ascends back into heaven, and is now waiting to return for His Bride – the Church...so that God might once again dwell in His perfect garden with His perfect people (Revelation 21-22).

TIMELESS GOSPEL TRUTHS

Even though all of Scripture is ultimately going towards God's Gospel Story, at times – the Word is providing for us timeless gospel truths. Truth about God's character. Truth about God's world. Truth about how to relate to God and others in God's world. These timeless gospel truths are not always immediately or obviously connected to God's Gospel Story – but they do teach all people of all time something about how to know God and how to relate to God by faith.

It is necessary to have the category of Timeless Gospel Truths because if you try to connect all Scripture to Jesus directly, the result will be an impressionist, mystical, or allegorical use of the text.

SMALL GROUP EXERCISE

The presence of God shows up throughout the entire Bible – the Garden, Tabernacle, Wilderness, Temple, Holy of Holies, Messiah, Spirit, Church, the Consummation of all Things.

Read **Psalm 84:10** – how then would theological reflection help you understand God's heart to dwell with His people & how good it is to be in God's presence?

GENESIS 3:8: What does God dwelling with Adam & Eve in the Garden tell us about God's intention to dwell with people & how good it is to dwell with God?

2 CHRONICLES 7:1-3: What does God dwelling with His people at the completion of the temple tell us about how good it is to be in God's presence?

JOHN 14:25-27: Jesus must go away so that His presence can be with His followers. How does this impact your understanding of God's presence from Psalm 84:10?

REVELATION 21:3: What does the consummation of all things in teach us about God's desire to dwell with His people & how good it is to be in God's presence?

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20: What are the implications of you living in God's presence today?