

The Importance of Theology for an Excellent Biblical Education

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Theology is vital for an excellent biblical education. Some might say, “We don’t need theology; just tell us what the Bible says!” But theology *does* convey what the Bible says, comprehensively, coherently, and culturally relevant. Theology is important for teaching and defending true doctrine, and for refuting false doctrine.

Important for Teaching

“Christian theology is necessary as a proper extension of the teaching function of the [church].”¹ Correct doctrine is essential to the proper relationship between believers and God. Christ commanded us to teach new converts all that He commanded them (Matt 28:20). As Christians we are sanctified—set apart and conformed to the image of Christ—through the truth of God’s word (John 17:17). When we teach theology we formulate doctrine so that believers might learn, understand and hold fast the faithful word (Titus 1:9).

Important for Defending

Apologetics is the systematic defense of the Christian faith over and against competing religions and world views (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). Theology gives us the framework within which to make such a defense.

Important for Refuting

Some question the legitimacy of theology and argue, “Why should I organize the teachings of Scripture in a form so different from the Bible? That’s not what God did!” True, God did not write theology books, but there is a good reason why *we* should. Why is that, and how does it relate to refuting false doctrine?

My answer is that when I must make a decision, I need to know right then and there all that God has revealed to us bearing on that decision. Most heresies in the past have started because people have failed to take into account the teaching of Scripture in its wholeness. They latched onto a piece of truth in the Bible and became so enamored with their brand-new discovery that they never bothered to learn what else the Bible had to say on that same subject. And when they did bother to look at the rest of the Bible, they twisted the other passages all out of shape to make them say just what the first passage said.²

¹ James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 12.

² Kenneth S. Kantzer, “A Systematic Biblical Dogmatics,” in *Doing Theology in Today’s World*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 471.

We refute doctrinal error not by *refusing* to engage in theology, but by engaging in *sound* theology!

Paul charged Timothy to “preach the word ... reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim 4:2). Theology is vital in helping us fulfill that charge today.