

TREK 201

Core Christian Beliefs

“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.” Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

TREK is a Discipleship Ministry of **Rockpointe Church**

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Introduction:

Can you remember a time when you got a favorite toy or new gadget and it came with a huge set of directions and instructional manual how to assemble it. The more complicated the gadget the bigger the set of instructions. As you read through it, it may have been really daunting. Studying the deeper things of God at times can seem to be a daunting task as well. The majority of people spend lots of time studying and discovering new disciplines such as mathematics, the sciences, languages, etc. during their time at school, but when they graduated they were fine never to pick up another book for deeper study again (regardless of the subject). Most of us have forgot how to really study and engage both our mind and our heart toward a single task.

When it comes to studying the Bible and the deeper things of God, many of us do not feel prepared for the task ahead. Some theology can be hard, even the Apostle Peter thought so (2 Peter 3:16). The Bible being a large and complex collection of books and letters, seems like a really large “instruction manual” translated from ancient languages which at times seems far away from anything practical to your own life in the 21st century. Because most have not felt an ease with deeper philosophy and theology, it has been too easy to just allow theologians and pastors do to the “work” of ministry and more in-depth research into the finer theological realms. However, God is not satisfied with the Church being less engaged into His spiritual and theological reality. God has called the Church to 1) Know Him and His work within this universe and 2) teach others the same – all as the greater knowledge of God changes lives (starting with yours). Consider the charge to the Church in **Ephesians 4:11-16**.

This semester you have the opportunity to begin your journey into the discipline of study, deeper study, into the mind, nature, and heart of God (Deut. 29:29). It is God’s desire that you know what you believe about Him, His Son Jesus, His Word, and how one is saved. Your beliefs critically inform your every act and intention, and things involving the spiritual realm are no different.

You are about to be introduced to Ten basic doctrines (teachings) concerning the nature of God and His relation to this world. These doctrines are considered “basic” because they claim what every true CHURCH of God on this earth has

always believed, everywhere – regardless of time, language, or culture – all these churches being bound to Holy Scripture and being led by the Holy Spirit. In other words, we are studying the foundational core doctrines (beliefs) of the Christian Church (the beliefs which make a Church “Christian”) which have been held by all faithful Bible Christians since the beginning of the Christian Church (33 AD).

[The definition of what makes a Church Christian derives from the oft quoted “Vincentian Canon” in the Ancient Latin phrase: “Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est” -translated as *(Moreover, in the Catholic [Universal] Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold to that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all)*. It comes from *The Commonitory* (ch. 2) by Vincent of Lérins.]

Another theological word to describe this study would be “orthodox” (Greek: *Right Beliefs*), such as we are studying the orthodoxy of the Christian Church. For now, however, let’s stick to the words Doctrines (Teachings) and Theology (Study of God).

-Theology is the discipline of the overarching study of God and all that is related to Him. Doctrines are specific teachings concerning particular subject matter within the greater realm of theology (such as the study of Christ, or the study of End Times). Let’s begin with a quick introduction to what Theology is and why it matters at all:

Introduction to Theology

Theology is the study of God and the universe that God created, a universe which also reflects God’s divine character (nature) and work. Attempting to better understand what “Theology” is or does or what the point of it is, there are several types of particular frameworks within the discipline of theology such as Biblical Theology, Pastoral Theology, Historical Theology, and Systematic Theology among others—each with their own unique parameters and aims. For the purpose of this brief study, we will focus on *Systematic Theology* which can be defined most precisely as the [synthesizing and analyzing of Christian Doctrines found within both natural and special revelation.] Well, wasn’t that easy? Maybe not. In essence, Systematic Theology consists of organizing biblical, theological, and spiritual ideas, propositions, and scriptural events in order to understand how they rightly relate both to God and each other.

Definition: A more concise definition of Theology would be “The study of God and His relationship with His creation in general and human beings in particular.”

Why does studying “theology” matter? What we believe about God affects every area of our life (whether we admit it or not). Our very perspective on life, our worldview, our biases, our interests, our relational ability, and our temperament are ALL affected by who we believe God to be and “if” or “whether” we feel God has any bearing on our life.

Our concept of God absolutely affects how we answer life's greatest questions:

- 1) Why am I on earth?
- 2) How did I get here? (Created and purposed OR chance)
- 3) What happens when I die?
- 4) Is there any meaning to (my) life?
- 5) By what rules will I choose to live my life?

Your belief about God and what God claims for Himself is vital to any Christian's (and non-Christian's) life and eternity (Matthew 10:33). As a believer in Christ, God has called you to not only trust in Him but to study Him, His Nature, and His works within creation – to study Him in order that your life would change (Life transformation); that you would become more like Christ (Romans 8:29); and that you would begin to mold your life around the ideas, truths, and realities that God loves. Consider: (Deuteronomy 29:29; Colossians 1:9-14; Philippians 1:9-11)

READ 2 Peter 1:2-3:

To know more about God is both a mental ascent and a spiritual experience. To know more about God is to know more about yourself, and to understand just how different you are than God. Probably the greatest step toward human maturity is embracing the stark realization that you are NOT God; you are absolutely dependent upon God for everything in your life. The sooner you realize this, the sooner you can focus on knowing more of Him and living with eternal peace (John 14:27; 10:10a). Your task in theology, is to learn more about God in order to learn more about yourself, yielding a life abandoned to worship God alone and allowing His truth to change every aspect of your life for His glory!

- God's Rebuke for those who ignore theology:

Jer. 4:22 (NIV) "My people are fools; they do not *know me*. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled at doing evil; they know not how to do good."

C.S. Lewis: "Everyone reads, everyone hears things discussed. Consequently, if you do not listen to *Theology*, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones--bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas. For a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today, are simply the ones which real theologians tried centuries ago and rejected. To believe in the popular religion of modern England [or America] is retrogression--like believing that the earth is flat."

- Scripture's admonition to embrace theology:

1 Tim. 6:20-21 (NIV) "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn

away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.”

Eph. 3:17b-19 “And I pray that you, rooted and founded in love yourselves, may be able to grasp (with all Christians) how wide and long and deep and high is the love of Christ--and to know for yourselves that love so far above our understanding. So will you be filled through all your being with God himself!”

C.S. Lewis: "The only really adequate instrument for learning about God, is the whole Christian community, waiting for Him together. Christian brotherhood is, so to speak, the technical equipment for this science, the laboratory outfit. That is why all these people who turn up every few years with some patent simplified religion of their own as a substitute for the Christian tradition are really wasting time. Like a man who has no instrument but an old pair of field glasses setting out to put all the real astronomers right. He may be a clever chap, he may be cleverer than some of the real astronomers, but he is not giving himself a chance. And two years later everyone has forgotten all about him, but the real science is still going on."

2 Cor. 10:3-5 “The truth is that, although we lead normal human lives, the battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level. The very weapons we use are not human but powerful in God's warfare for the destruction of the enemy's strongholds. Our battle is to break down every deceptive argument and every imposing defense that men erect against the true *knowledge of God*.”

Holding The Knowledge Of God In Contempt

Christians believe in *revelation theology*: We know God because he has *revealed* himself to us. The knowledge of God is a great gift. Were it not for this, it would be impossible for us to "figure him out." But the revelation God has given may not fit our notions of how we think he ought to be. So many have rejected the knowledge of God and follow their own ideas, detached from the Scriptures and the Body of Christ. For these sects, "Theology Bashing" has become popular.

Rom 1:22,25a, 28 (NIV) “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie.... Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain *the knowledge of God*, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not be done.”

*A.W. Tozer: "We can hold a correct view of the truth only by daring to believe everything that God has said about Himself... Much of our difficulty as seeking Christians stems from our unwillingness to take God as He is and adjust our lives accordingly. We insist on trying to modify Him and to bring him nearer to our own image."

1 Sam. 2:12 (NAS) Now the son's of Eli were worthless men; they did not *know the Lord*.

1 Cor. 15:34b (NIV) For there are some who are *ignorant of God*--I say this to your shame.

1 Cor. 15:34 (TEB) Come back to your senses and stop your sinful ways. I say this to your shame, some of you do not *know God*.

Titus 1:16a (NIV) They claim to *know God*, but by their actions they deny him.

Rom 10:2 (TEB) I can be a witness for them that they are deeply devoted to God. But their devotion is not based on *true knowledge*.

Mat 22:29 (NIV) Jesus replied, "You are in error because *you do not know* the Scriptures or the power of God."

2 Thes 1:8 (NIV) He will punish those who *do not know God* and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Gal 4:8-9 Once you were *ignorant of God*, and enslaved to "gods" who are not really gods at all; but now that you have come to a *knowledge of God*--or rather, now that God has acknowledged you--how can you go back to elemental things like these, that can do nothing and give you nothing, and be their slaves?

Spiritual Advice To Those Who Lack Theology:

John 8:31-32 (NEB) Jesus said, "If you dwell within *the revelation* I have brought, you are indeed my disciples; you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Prov 2:1-5 (NIV) My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find *the knowledge of God*.

Col 2:8 (NIV) See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Prov 1:7 (NIV) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

