

Article 1

Why All Christians Should Care about Biblical Theology

[Miles V. Van Pelt](#)

Crucial for the Health of the Church

Biblical theology is crucial for the health of the church because the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” ([Eph. 2:20](#)). Additionally, this Word upon which the church is built is both living and life-giving ([Ps. 119:25, 50](#); [2 Tim. 3:16](#); [Heb. 4:12](#)).

It is the record, the deposit, the testimony of God’s good news in Jesus Christ. It is a legal, objective, public document that describes and explains the covenantal relationship by which God has condescended and united himself to his people through Jesus Christ, our eternal high priest.

What Does Biblical Theology Do?

Simply put, the discipline of biblical theology works to make sense of God’s Word for God’s people. It does this by asking two basic questions:

What is the Bible about?

How does the Bible work?

Simply put, the discipline of biblical theology works to make sense of God’s Word for God’s people.

To answer these questions, we study the biblical text and, by way of submission to that text, allow it to establish its own theological categories and promote its own theological message.

Biblical theology also bridges the gap between exegesis (our study of texts) and systematic theology (our formulation of doctrine from the text). It provides context for exegesis, teeth for systematic theology, and depth for practical theology and Christian living.

While the answers to the two questions above are debated, Luke offers some help in [Acts 28](#). At the end of this chapter, Luke summarizes Paul’s two-year curriculum in the following manner:

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. ([Acts 28:23](#); see also 28:30-31)

If we pay attention, we will come to understand that Luke, through Paul, has provided us with the answers to these two fundamental questions.

What Is the Bible About?

First, what is the Bible about? It is about Jesus and the kingdom of God. Jesus functions as the theological center of biblical theology. He is the sum and substance of the biblical message. He is the goal, the point, and the significance of every text. He is God’s gospel and, as the theological center, provides unity and meaning for all

of the diversity found in the biblical record, from Levitical underwear in [Exodus 39](#) to the new heavens and earth in [Revelation 21-22](#).

The kingdom of God functions as the thematic framework for biblical theology. This is the theme within which all other themes exist and are united. It is the realm of the prophet, priest, and king; the place of wisdom and the scribe; the world of the apostles, and now elders and deacons in the church. Every biblical theme is a kingdom of God theme. If Jesus is the theological bull's eye on the biblical target, then the kingdom of God travels on the path of redemptive history to arrive at that target. If Jesus as the theological center gives meaning to the biblical message, then the kingdom of God as the thematic framework provides the context for that message.

How Does the Bible Work?

Now that we understand that the Bible is about Jesus and his kingdom, how then does the Bible work? It works in the categories of the Law and the Prophets or, in its full form, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (or Writings; see [Luke 24:44](#)).

Here, Luke is referring to the arrangement of the Old Testament in its original, three-fold division. These divisions are covenantal in nature, and they ultimately apply to both the Old and New Testaments as the covenantal structure of the Christian Bible. In the Law, we have the covenant itself, filled with the life and teachings of the covenant mediators—Moses in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament. In the Prophets, we have the history of the covenant and the prophetic interpretation of that history (covenant history). Finally, in the writings, we have those practical books that teach us how to think and live in light of the covenant (covenant life).

Much more work needs to be done trying to understand how the Bible works. This important question is often neglected in church life, and it has yet to receive adequate attention from biblical theologians. [This chart](#) helps to capture the unity and design of the Christian Bible from a covenantal, biblical theological perspective.

Thinking and Living Biblically

With the discipline of biblical theology, we come to understand that the Bible has a theological center, a thematic framework, and a covenantal structure.

When asked about the Bible's content, we can answer with confidence: Jesus and the kingdom of God.

When asked about the nature of the Bible, or how it works, our answer is simple: covenant.

This three-fold perspective for biblical theology provides unity and comprehends diversity. It sets us on the road to good, robust biblical thinking and living.

That's why biblical theology is crucial for the health of the church.

Miles V. Van Pelt Ph.

Article 2

Why Charismatics Need to Study Theology

Lucy Peppiatt, who teaches at Westminster Theological Centre and is the author of Unveiling Paul's Women

A Charismatic Journey

I remember very clearly, in my 30's, realizing that I wanted to study theology at degree level. I had no idea that it would end with me doing a PhD, leading a college, writing books, and teaching. It hadn't been a "career move"! I thought I was studying theology so that I'd be a better co-pastor with my husband and because I loved it. I also thought then that these were good enough reasons for all that study and investment, and I still think they are.

I couldn't fail to notice, however, that I was in a minority in my church circles. In fact, I didn't personally know any other women (and knew only a handful of men) involved in our world of charismatic Christianity in the UK who were studying or had studied theology to PhD level. And the ones who had pursued higher degrees had done it as part of ministerial training. I was a layperson who didn't really think I was being 'trained.' I was simply learning, and loving it.

Historically, evangelical charismatics have carried a suspicion of formal theological education. The fears were that you might become too critical, too jaded, too cynical, too cerebral to be fit for anything practical, or worst of all, lose your faith. Negative experiences of young people going off to study theology at university, only to be deconstructed and left in pieces, scared off the older generation all together and they warned young people not to pursue theology. Even I encountered this in my 30's from some well-meaning advisors. Thankfully, the mood has shifted a bit, both in the university and in the church. I meet more and more Christians in the evangelical charismatic world who really don't need to be persuaded that studying the Bible, Christian doctrine, and church history in an academic setting is a good thing! I also think that the academy has become more, not less, respectful of faith positions.

There's still more work to be done though, in persuading Christians that study and learning should be a normal part of their discipleship and growth in the faith. I don't really understand the resistance, but I still see it around me, so these are some of mine and others' thoughts on why all Christians should study some theology.

Perspectives: a professor

I listened to an [interview](#) recently with D. Stephen Long (Professor of Ethics at Southern Methodist University), who began by saying that the main reason to study theology, the science of God, is because the study of theology is 'a useless discipline.' He goes on to explain what he means by that. He's noticed over the years that, 'If I need to give students a reason why that matters, then often those reasons become more important than the subject matter itself.' The reason to study theology, the study of God, is to study God, and 'Knowledge of God is an end in itself, it is not a means to something else. ... As Augustine put it, "God is to be enjoyed, not used."'

His second reason though is that the uselessness has a 'use function.' (Useless doesn't mean pointless.) The contemplation of truth, beauty, and goodness is part of the essence of what makes us more human.

In addition to this, he notes that there's always been an awareness in the church that faith drives us to seek wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. This has been mine and countless others' experience. You can't know God and not want to know him more. Charismatics are great at singing about it—"I wanna know you more..."—not so great at engaging with the multiple ways that God has given us to do it!

The way to know God more in order to love him more, is to learn more about him. Of course that means seeking him and his presence in prayer, worship, and contemplation, and asking the Spirit to reveal the mysteries of God to our hearts, but it also means applying our minds in ways that we apply them to learning any subject: learning the original languages of the Bible, reading books, researching meaning, listening to teachers who are more learned than we are, asking questions, etc. The two pursuits should go together, and when they do, there are so many reasons why this helps us to be better Christians and more effective disciples.

Perspectives: a student

Out of interest I asked a bunch of charismatic Christians in their 20's who had either studied academic theology, or were in the process of studying, or were about to start studying, why they had chosen to do what they were doing. Here's what they came up with – and this is in no particular order.

It helps you to learn from others' mistakes.

It gives you the ability to speak more precisely and truthfully about God.

It challenges your assumptions, which strengthens your ability to rebut sceptics/skeptics.

It gives you an idea of what the non-negotiables of the Christian faith are.

It keeps you from error and believing nonsense.

It means you can study your own traditions and learn about where you fit in in church history.

It gives you the opportunity to think about the pastoral implications of what you believe.

The truth sets you free and studying good theology sets you free.

It enables you to have an answer for the hope that's within you.

It shapes your character because what we believe defines us.

It feeds your mind and your spirit.

It gives you more confidence when people ask you questions about the Bible and your faith.

The church has often abused its power. It's important for all people to know what they believe and not leave it up to the leaders.

You have a duty and obligation to study your faith.

It's arrogant to assume you know all there is to know already, or that it's irrelevant to you, or that it might be at your fingertips should you want it.

It takes discipline and work and that's a good thing.

It deepens our worship of God.

It can be deeply moving and illuminating (someone remembered a story of a young man who just wept in response to understanding the implications of the incarnation). It gives you tools for further learning, you find out where to look for more information and who to turn to for answers.

It is inspiring to know the stories and thinking of so many men and women through the ages who have known Jesus.

It's humbling to find that there's so much to discover, to realize that you don't know it all, and that no, you weren't the first person to think that.

I think that was most of what they said. Clearly, these are the comments of young people who have been strengthened and equipped by their studies for mission and discipleship, not disempowered. They came up with loads more than I had first had in my little list. There are only two things I would add. In my experience, it helps you to know why you disagree with other Christians and so hopefully, to disagree better. And they implied this, but I want to spell it out—good theology leads you to love God and love your neighbor better.

Those are a lot of good reasons! I want to add another perspective and that is from my experience as both a theology student, now a teacher myself, and a pastor of young people.

Perspectives: a pastor

There is something that grows in Christians, which happened to me and I've seen in others, which is a hunger for depth and substance that can only be met by intentional and disciplined study. Of course you can read books on your own, but it's not the same as being in a classroom, learning from someone who knows more than you, whose faith you respect, and whose character you admire. There is something compelling, in a world where the Christian faith is so often disparaged or dismissed, about a man or woman who has turned their impressive intellect into seeking God, studying the scriptures, turning over stones, considering other possibilities, and coming up with reasoned, intelligent, and biblically based answers for why you should put your whole trust in the person of Jesus Christ and your whole life into his hands.

Further to that, there's a delight you experience when someone takes a Bible story and explains the background, or the meaning of a word that you wouldn't have known otherwise, when they use their scholarship to bring the Bible to life. Or when someone shows you God in a different light that suddenly makes so much more sense to you because you feel maybe you knew it deep down but you couldn't have articulated it. Or when someone tells you about a time in church history where you see exactly the same issues that you're facing going around again and it helps you to work out what you think and how you should respond. Or when you hear a theologian's comments on the society that you live in and you're able to step out of your culture for a second for a better and more enlightened perspective. Or when you read the writings of a Church Father or Mother on the nature of God that becomes an outpouring of praise and worship and you feel that too. If you're a Christian, it's about bringing all the aspects of your life together with time to reflect and think about who God is, why we think and do what we do, and how that might affect the world. It's the stuff of life.

I know that studying theology isn't always like that. Some books/authors can be dull, pompous, obscure, irritating, and just plain wrong ... but that is also half the fun of it! And I also know that if we had amazing teaching programmes in all our churches and all our conferences that we could maybe find those things there, but we all know that it's not like that. There's a more serious side to this conversation because the truth is that I was bored and frustrated in the charismatic church. I was bored of the talks that were just one story after another. I was tired of repetitive and me-centred worship. I was frustrated by simplistic answers that I knew weren't well thought through and were going to be pastorally disastrous. I think I was in danger of mentally drifting off and becoming disengaged. Theology won me over and kept me in the centre of the church in a way that I needed.

One of my little group of 20's said that he'd been warned off thinking too much on the grounds that if you engage your mind, you short-circuit the work of the Spirit. He joked that his church culture had taught that we're transformed by the removal of our minds! We don't want this. We don't want a brain drain. We need to attract and to keep the curious, the questioners, the seekers, the hungry, the bored. We need to feed them, nurture them, and engage them. We need to realize that teenagers and young people need more than cool youth leaders and worship songs. They need depth and good answers to their questions. I hope that WTC will be part of a change in culture in the charismatic church where it will become the most natural thing in the world for Christians to be educated in their faith.

WTC

Why do people not study? There's always the time and money thing, and I get that, but I think there are two bigger barriers. The barriers I see most are that theological study is seen as either intimidating or irrelevant—the stumbling blocks of the under- and over-confident!

We are doing everything we can at WTC to eliminate the stumbling blocks. We've created a place where it's not intimidating, it's not irrelevant, and where it is affordable and accessible. We're trying to make sure that there are no more excuses, unless someone finds they are still too far from a Hub, and we're working on that. I love our students and the enormous variety of people that turn up. All of them are Christians wanting to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of their faith, but for very different reasons. The majority of our students are from almost any sphere of work you could think of: the health service, accountancy, caring, farming, business, the charity sector, etc. They generally say they 'want to go deeper with God.' Others want to study to enrich their ministries in the local church. Some are paid by the church, are church leaders, or are preparing for church leadership. Still others are in recovery from addiction or building a new life having served a prison sentence. It all makes for interesting discussion in the classroom!

These are mostly people who come just to study applied kingdom theology for life and work. But we're also branching out in 2019 to begin two new vocational programmes in 'Kingdom Theology and Student Ministry' and 'Kingdom Theology and Church Planting and Leadership.' These are exciting new ventures and will offer more focused training.

I've already said that I really don't understand why someone wouldn't want to study theology, but I hope that this post will help those who are wondering why you would, what you'd get out of it, and if it's for them. I hope in a small way I've described why studying and teaching theology, the science of God, is challenging, exciting, and endlessly fascinating.

Article 3

Why Charismatics Should Cut Glossolalia (Tongues)

Out of Their Theology

(Attention-Dr. Stan Newton or any teacher here at Crown Institute agrees with the conclusions of this article—it is included to be used as an example of how to think theologically. Looks for gaps of logic in his presentation. Are there doctrinal presuppositions that affect his view?

How would you respond?

Author: [Jim Boucher](#) on June 16, 2017

There is no doubt that there is some form of tongues in the Bible. But typically, when people refer to tongues, they think of ecstatic speech or the “language of the angels” that is common in Pentecostal churches. It might be surprising to learn that there are actually different ways that people understand tongues. The word tongues just means languages. In that sense, English is a tongue. Many theologians think that this is the best way to understand the biblical data concerning tongues. God would equip believers with new languages to serve as a sign to the unbelievers. I think this is the most robust model and beyond that, there are several reasons why charismatics should cut glossolalia (tongues) out of their theology.

In fact, I think that a charismatic church could be consistent and function without that practice. They could retain their understanding of the continuation of the spiritual gifts with the simple amendment that tongues are human languages. There is nothing inconsistent about that. In fact, I think it would be a better way to practice their faith.

Glossolalia Harms The Christian Witness

The final marching orders for Christians is to share the gospel with the world (Matthew 28:19). Apologists such as William Lane Craig suggest that part of sharing the gospel will be impacting how the world perceives Christianity. As the apostle Paul said, “I have become all things to all people so that by all means I may save some.” (1st Corinthians 9:22-23). The core truths of the gospel are not changed, but the context in which it is presented is changed.

So how does glossolalia impact the gospel? While it may be a fundamental element of the charismatic’s religious piety, it is pretty bizarre to outsiders. I do not mean bizarre in the sense that a resurrection is bizarre, because that is just a miracle. This is a behavior that people are actually exhibiting. It comes off as overly emotional, anti-intellectual, and even creepy. That is not to say that glossolalia truly exhibits those characteristics, but that is how it is perceived by unbelievers.

Further, miracles are supposed to function as a witness to unbelievers. This purpose for miracles is evident from the very beginning. Moses said that he performed signs so that the people would believe in YHWH (Exodus 4:5, 31). Nicodemus seemed to have this view of miracles as well (John 3:2). When John the Baptist was having doubts, Jesus pointed to his sign miracles (Luke 7:22). Finally, when Paul refers to tongues, he says that they are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers. If Paul were referring to the glossolalia rather than to known human languages, it seems bizarre to think that ecstatic speech would be able to function as a sign to unbelievers, especially when it can be manifested by other religious bodies.

Anticipated Objection – Could The Holy Spirit Use Glossolalia?

It may be said that the Holy Spirit could use glossolalia and move on the individual’s heart. I certainly believe that God takes the scales out of the unbeliever’s eyes so that they believe the gospel. But if glossolalia is to function as a sign to unbelievers, and the only way to believe in that sign is if you are already moved upon by the Holy Spirit, then it seems that glossolalia would be redundant. On the other hand, I think that God could work through [evidence](#) by softening their heart and removing anti-theological obstacles. But the glossolalia would be a little different because it is not intrinsically persuasive, and the only way that one would be convinced by it (given this objection) is if the Holy Spirit compels them into understanding.

Another point worth harking back to is the cultural effect that glossolalia could have. Even if we grant that sometimes the Holy Spirit will compel somebody to believe based on the glossolalia, it would still have a negative cultural impact. Christianity would still be perceived as emotional, anti-intellectual, and creepy. Far from being a sign to unbelievers, this would create additional burdens.

Let’s contrast this with biblical miracles. In John 11, Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus. He told his disciples, “Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” When he raised him from the dead, he said the famous words, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” Then, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.” People can deny that a resurrection happened. But for those who believe that it happened – who actually saw it, it is a

real sign. But the glossolalia does not have that kind of persuasion. It does not compel, it repels.

Ambiguous Biblical Data

Upon reading this article, many of our charismatic brethren might be inclined to say that other considerations aside, the Bible forms our normative Christian practice. So even if glossolalia repels unbelievers, we should stand on the authority of the Bible rather than on man's opinions of biblical practices. I take this objection to heart. But I think that in the case of glossolalia, we might have a bit more freedom because the biblical data is pretty ambiguous. In fact, there is a model of speaking in tongues that accounts for virtually every relevant passage.

As a sign to unbelievers, tongues are known human languages that are given miraculously. They are not necessarily for the purpose of evangelism (because biblical data suggests that some people did not even understand the known human language that they were speaking [1st Corinthians 14:2]). But the gift was (and perhaps still is) a sign to unbelievers. That model can account neatly for passages such as Acts 2 and 1st Corinthians 12-14. Acts 2 (the Pentecost narrative) is easier to reconcile and is often conceded by charismatic scholars, such as Douglas Oss and C. Samuel Storms in the Four Views book about charismatic gifts.

In v. 7, the onlookers point out that those speaking are from Galilee and would not know those languages. Yet they hear them in their own language. Whether the miracle is related to the hearing (the people merely hear them in their own language) or the speaking (they are actually speaking those languages) is pretty ambiguous, but we can say that it is probably related to both. But Pentecost is not too hotly contested; many charismatics agree with this interpretation.

Applying The Model To 1st Corinthians 12-14

Many would argue that the most important text for understanding glossolalia is 1st Corinthians 14. Paul tells his readers that "Nobody understands," and that he is "speaking mysteries." But I think it is perfectly plausible to understand this as actual human languages. When he says that nobody understands, he means nobody in the local context (in the church) understands. So in that sense, it would be just as mysterious as glossolalia.

To underline Paul's confidence that some ethnic groups understood the languages, though, look at his citation in verse 21. He quotes Isaiah 28:11, writing "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me." Obviously Isaiah is referring to known human languages. So with that in mind, it might not be implausible to think that 1st Corinthians 14 is also referring to known human languages.

I suppose the most relevant proof-text would come from the previous chapter. In 1st Corinthians 13:1, Paul refers to the language of the angels. Since the adjacent chapters pertain to gifts and tongues, he may have mentioned it because tongues were on his mind. However, I think Paul could have been making a rhetorical point. In the next verse, he referred to knowing "all mysteries," having "all knowledge" and "all faith." These are rhetorical devices and out of our grasp. So we might think that the language of the angels is as well.

I want to emphasize that I am not saying that glossolalia is an exegetical impossibility in this passage. But other models, such as the one that I have presented, seem perfectly consistent and comport with the biblical data. Having made that point, that will mean that the central passages for the glossolalia are ambiguous at best. I just do not know that I would want to hang a doctrine that impacts so much of my piety, behavior and church practice on ambiguous passages.

As A Miracle, It Is Unfalsifiable

Every charismatic scholar that I have encountered is willing to admit that tongues can be faked. If you think that statement is a little too sweeping, I will amend it if you provide a source. We see glossolalia across the religious spectrum, present in New Age mysticism, Paganism, and several cults scattered across the world. That is not to say that it is inspired by demons or anything inflammatory like that. But it does have the earmarks of a common psychological manifestation in religious practice.

Yet it seems difficult to distinguish the glossolalia in these religious sects from the glossolalia exhibited by our charismatic brethren. In fact, if we think again of it as a sign to unbelievers, it becomes almost unfalsifiable. If you are to say that there is no way to tell the difference, and it has to be accepted by faith or something like that, then it will take on unfalsifiable traits. Any comparative or linguistic analysis will be rendered obsolete. It is just a matter of faith.

But once again I would like to make the point – something like that could not function as a sign to unbelievers. It could not be proven to be a miracle, which is against the character of miracles that we see in the biblical pattern. Even in another seemingly ambiguous miracle, prophecy, is subject to analysis. We are to compare prophecies with Scripture. We are to see if what they said comes to pass. If it does not, then she is not a true prophet. But there is no similar test that we could impose on the glossolalia. If Paul tells us to “Test all things” (1st Thessalonians 5:21), and John tells us to “Test the spirits” (1st John 4:1), then why pass on a sign that is inherently untestable?

What Do Linguists Think?

As indicated, some charismatics might suggest that as a heavenly language, glossolalia is simply not subject to linguistic analysis. I am a little skeptical of whether that is true. A language, whether heavenly or earthly, will have patterns, grammar, and recognizable distinctions that make communication possible. Otherwise it would not be a language. We might be able to say that there is some form of expression in heaven, but we would not say that it was a language. We would say that it was an expression. So I do think that so long as we are calling it a language, it will have to be subject to analysis. Further, if it is not, then we would fall back into the ditch of an unfalsifiable miracle.

Yet outsiders who listen to charismatics speaking in tongues will often note that there is no recognizable pattern. My personal experience with glossolalia came from [Oneness Pentecostalism](#), in which of course my charismatic brethren would rightly object is not a legitimate form of Pentecostalism. But even so, I do not know that the glossolalia speech would differ significantly. Anecdotally, it is pretty easy to recognize it as fraudulent.

This conclusion seems to be supported by linguistic analysis. As I pointed out [here](#), a linguist from the University of Toronto analyzed glossolalia. He concluded that people were stitching together sounds from known languages. We might have heard Korean or Japanese on the television and buried it in our subconscious. Then it comes out during glossolalia. The Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion as well as the Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion report similar findings. This would also explain why atheists who de-convert retain the ability to speak in tongues. In fact, I could speak in tongues if I wanted to, even not believing in it. But I do not want to. Overall, I think that glossolalia has the earmarks of fraudulence.

Why Charismatics Should Cut Glossolalia (Tongues) Out of Their Theology

I think it is possible to be a practicing charismatic without glossolalia. You could still believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an event distinct from salvation, but tongues would no longer be part of the program. It would be something like when Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” and was led into the wilderness (Luke 4:1). Being infilled by the Holy Spirit could come at any point in one’s spiritual walk when they are devoted to Scripture, prayer and fasting. There is no reason that it has to be accompanied by tongues.

Beyond that, for the reasons that I have listed, I do think that glossolalia brings more harm than good. I understand that many people have a deep, emotional connection to glossolalia, and that is why I have intentionally and carefully avoided any language that might sound inflammatory. But I do think that the church would be better off without it. It [1] harms the Christian witness, [2] depends on highly ambiguous passages, [3] is an unfalsifiable miracle, and [4] is evidenced against by linguistic analysis.

[Jim Boucher](#) on June 16, 2017

Article 4

10 Things You Should Know about Biblical Theology

February 10, 2017 by: [Chris Bruno](#)

1. Biblical theology is different than systematic and historical theology.

When some hear “biblical theology,” they might assume that I’m talking about theology that is faithful to the Bible. While its goal is certainly to reflect biblical truth, the discipline of biblical theology is different from other theological methods.

For example, the goal of systematic theology is to gather everything the Bible teaches about a particular topic or issue. For example, studying everything the Bible teaches about God or salvation would be doing systematic theology. When we are doing

historical theology, our goal will be to understand how Christians throughout the centuries understood the Bible and theology. So we might study John Calvin's doctrine of Christ. While both systematic and historical theology are important ways to study theology, biblical theology is a different and complementary theological discipline.

2. Biblical theology emphasizes God's progressive revelation.

Rather than gathering everything the Bible says about a particular topic, the goal of biblical theology is to trace the progressive revelation of God and his saving plan. For example, in [Genesis 3:15](#), God promised that the offspring of the woman would one day crush the head of the serpent. But it is not immediately clear what this will look like. As this theme is progressively revealed, we find that this offspring of the woman is also the offspring of Abraham and the royal Son who comes from the tribe of Judah, Jesus the Messiah.

3. Biblical theology traces the storyline of the Bible.

Closely related to the previous point, the discipline of biblical theology also traces the unfolding story of the Bible. The Bible tells us one story about our Creator God, who made all things and rules over all. Our first parents, and all of us since then, rejected God's good rule over them. But God promised to send a Savior—and the rest of the Old Testament after [Genesis 3](#) points forward to that coming Savior. In the New Testament, we learn that the Savior has come and redeemed a people, and that he is coming again one day to make all things new. We can sum up this story in five words: creation, fall, redemption, new creation. Tracing this story is the task of biblical theology.

The Bible tells us one story about our Creator God, who made all things and rules over all.

4. Biblical theology uses the categories that the writers of Scripture themselves used. Rather than looking first to modern questions and categories, biblical theology pushes us toward the categories and symbols that the authors of Scripture used. For example, the backbone of the biblical storyline is the unfolding revelation of God's covenants with his people. However, in the modern world, we don't tend to use the category of covenant very often. Biblical theology helps us get back to the categories, symbols, and ways of thinking that the human authors of Scripture used.

5. Biblical theology values the unique contributions of each author and section of Scripture.

God revealed himself in the Scriptures over the course of about fifteen hundred years through around forty different authors. Each of those authors wrote in his own words and even had his own theological emphases and themes. While all of these complement each other, a great advantage of biblical theology is that it provides us with a method for studying and learning from each author of Scripture. It can be helpful to harmonize the Gospels, but we also have to remember that God did not give us one Gospel account. He gave us four, and each of those four add a rich contribution to our overall understanding of the whole.

6. Biblical theology also values the unity of the Bible.

While biblical theology can provide us with a great tool for understanding the theology of each author of Scripture, it also helps us to see the unity of the Bible in

the midst of all of its human authors across the centuries. When we view the Bible as a series of fragmented stories spread across the ages, then we fail to see the main point. As we trace the themes of the Bible that connect across the ages, we will see that the Bible tells us one story of one God who is committed to saving one people for his own glory.

7. Biblical theology teaches us to read the whole Bible with Christ at the center. Since the Bible tells one story of the one God saving his people, we must also see Christ at the center of this story. One of the goals of biblical theology is learning to read the whole Bible as a book about Jesus. Not only must we see the whole Bible as a book about Jesus, but we must also understand how that story fits together. In [Luke 24](#), Jesus corrects his disciples for failing to see that the unity of the Bible actually points to the centrality of Christ. He calls them foolish and slow of heart to believe the Bible because they did not understand that the whole Old Testament teaches that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer for our sins and then be exalted through his resurrection and ascension ([Luke 24:25–27](#)). Biblical theology helps us understand the proper Christocentric shape of the whole Bible.

8. Biblical theology shows us what it means to be a part of God's redeemed people.