



Chapter Six: “What Is Theology?”

Introduction

What do you think of Frame’s premise: “activity precedes definitions,” and its corollary “it is just good in principle for you to have some experience doing theology before you try to define it”?

Theology is Knowing God

What do the following verses teach us about theology as “knowing God”?

John 17:3 — And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Isa 55:8-9 — God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways ours.

Rom 11:33-36 — God’s judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.

Rom 1:21 — Everyone knows God because God has revealed himself clearly in the created world.

1 Co 2:14-16 — The “soul-ish” person doesn’t receive the things of the Spirit ... But we (the “Spiritual” ones) have the mind of Christ.

1 Jn 5:20 — And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Mt 11:25 — At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.”

Theology is Knowing God’s Control

What do you think of Frame’s statement: “You will grow in your knowledge of God as you see more and more things as under his control: the present, the future, your own life, your sin, your salvation”?

Theology is Knowing God’s Authority

What do you think of Frame’s premise: “There is a spiral relationship between knowledge and obedience: more of the one leads to more of the other”?

Knowledge ↔ **Obedience**

1. Knowledge of God produces obedience

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. (Jn 14:21)

2) Obedience leads to the knowledge of God

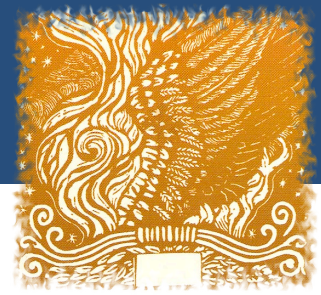
If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. (Jn 7:17)

3) Scripture sometimes equates knowledge and obedience

He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; Then it was well. Is not that what it means to know Me? declares the LORD. (Jer 22:16)

4) Obedience is a criterion of knowledge ... “If you want to know whether someone knows God, look at his life.”

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 Jn 2:3-4)



5) If we are going to seek knowledge, we must do it in an obedient way.

“Knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. (1 Co 8: 1)

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (Jas 3: 17)

Theology is Knowing God’s Presence

John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.1 (paraphrased): “You can’t know God without knowing yourself, and you can’t know yourself without knowing God.”

The Lord’s Authority

(Normative Perspective)

Knowledge leads to obedience.
Obedience leads to knowledge.

Exegetical Theology

does its work by careful readings of each sentence, each word in the Bible.

The Lord’s Control

Situational Perspective

To know God is to see our lives more & more under his control.

Biblical Theology

studies the history of redemption.

The Lord’s Presence

(Existential Perspective)

Knowing God is about a deep relationship with him

Systematic Theology

asks: “What does the whole Bible teach about x,y,z?”

Theology is a Disciplined Study of God

Compare the following approaches ...

Friedrich Schleiermacher: “Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech.”

Charles Hodge: Theology is “the exhibition of the facts of Scripture in their proper order and relation...”

John Frame: “Then why do we need theology? Here is my suggestion: we need theology for the sake of people. Theology is the application of the Word by persons to the world and to all areas of human life. We need theology not because there is something wrong with the Bible, an improper form perhaps, but because there is something wrong with us.”