

Weekly Newsletter: 25th July 2023

Reflection: Theology - The Missing Piece in Discipleship

By Jen Wilkin and J.T. English (for the full article go [here](#))

When we hear Jesus's command in Matthew 28 to go and make disciples, we tend to think of it in terms of evangelism. We picture Jesus's disciples fanning out across the known world, armed with gospel tracts. We picture joyful conversions followed by joyful baptisms. And then we picture those evangelists moving on to the next town, carrying the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea to the ends of the earth.

But if our understanding of the Great Commission is primarily a call to evangelism, we've forgotten a key piece: theology. Jesus's final command isn't a call to make converts but a call to make disciples. And as the Great Commission states, that call will require us to teach converts to "observe all that [Jesus has] commanded" (Matthew 28:20). When we think about discipleship, we must see the importance of passing along the good deposit of doctrine that was passed along to us.

If a disciple is a learner, a disciple maker is a teacher. But we cannot teach what we've never been taught. We cannot transmit to another generation what hasn't been transmitted to us. We won't aspire to teach anyone the basic beliefs of our faith if we don't first consider ourselves to be theologians. So why don't we? Why do many avoid taking up the task of learning doctrine? It could be because we've believed one of the following lies.

Lie #1: Theology is for academics.

Sometimes theology can be overly academic, but that doesn't mean it can't be accessible. Because academics do theology at a level some of us never will doesn't mean all of us should avoid doing theology altogether. Most of us will never get a PhD in applied mathematics, but we still benefit from learning maths beyond a rudimentary level, because it helps us live our everyday lives well. The same should be true with theology. Doctrine should be accessible to everyone.

Lie #2: Theology is impractical.

Everyone—Christians and non-Christians alike—wants to live a life that makes sense. We want to give our lives to what matters most. Just look at how impassioned people are about the causes they support, their political convictions, and even their favourite sports teams. We all want to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.

If theology is simply words about God, and God is the most important being—the ultimate Reality—is there anything that matters more? And is there anything more practical? If theology is understanding who God is

and orienting our lives to him, is there anything more important? No, there's nothing more practical than a life well lived, and theology is God's ordained means to that end.

Lie #3: Theology is heartless.

Some think theology emphasizes thinking, not feeling. This is true in part. But it's more accurate to say theology begins with the mind and moves to the heart. Doing theology is the work of mind renewal for the purpose of heart transformation (Rom 12:2) Christianity isn't a religion of the mind only—some cold, dead, and dusty intellectual exercise. But neither is it a religion of the heart only—all emotion and fervour, and no reasoned belief.

A more biblical theology doesn't worship the life of the mind but rather acknowledges that "the heart cannot love what the mind does not know." Theology fails if it's an intellectual exercise only. Theology functions properly if an enlivened intellect fuels an enlivened heart. It recognizes the beauty of reason in the life of faith and it gives to reason a vocabulary and a vision. Thinking deeply about God should always result in feeling deeply about God. Theology that doesn't lead to doxology (worship) isn't theology at all but a vain pursuit of knowledge.

Lived Theology: The Key for Discipleship

So is theology academic? It can be. But it's meant to be accessible to all disciples. Is theology impractical? Far from it. Knowing and loving God well is the most practical thing in the world. Does theology lack feeling? Not at all. True theology always leads to loving and worshiping God.

Theology matters because it shapes us not merely at the intellectual level but at the emotional and the practical level. It has a holistic effect on our lives: we think differently, feel differently, and act differently as a result of developing better categories for understanding God.

What is theology? Words about God.

Who does theology? Everybody.

We're doing theology when we preach, pray, and sing, but we're also doing theology when we go to work, take a holiday, care for an aging parent, fight sin, raise kids, mourn the loss of a loved one, spend our money, and grow old.

Why does theology matter? Because living well matters, and that's the heart of discipleship.

Pickleball and Table Tennis – this Tuesday

The church will be open on Tuesday evening at 7pm for anyone wanting to play pickleball and/ or table tennis. Everyone is welcome - contact Andy Scott for more details.

Next Missionary Prayer Meeting – Save the date!

The Mission Team would like to invite everyone to our next missionary prayer meeting which will be in person, in the church on **23rd September** at 9am. The plan is to have small groups to pray for our missionaries after they have updated us. Tea and coffee will be served afterwards. Please keep the date free!

Summer Appeal 2023

Thank you to everyone for their generosity. The Summer Appeal currently stands at **£12,301** and will go towards the support of our three missionaries. The appeal will close at the end of July.



The Sorsamo Family in Finland



Lorna Ferguson in Japan



James Stewart in Singapore

You still have time to give, cheques (made payable to Holyrood Evangelical Church) and cash in an envelope marked 'Summer Appeal' can be placed in the offering box or given to Nick Archer. Or you can contribute by using the bank details on holyroodevangelical.org (use reference 'Summer Appeal'). Thank you!

SASRA – Life Behind the Wire



SASRA are hosting 'Life Behind the Wire' **this Saturday (29th July)** at 7pm to hear stories of what God is doing in the lives of young people in the Armed Forces. Everyone is warmly invited and it will take place at Ferniehill Evangelical Church.

Summer Plans

The Barnards are flying back from the US this week and Joe will be preaching on Sunday morning. Neil Longwe has two more Sundays with us on his summer placement and finishes up on Sunday 6th August.

Gordon and Avril Margery are hoping to join us on Sunday 6th August when they are on holiday in Scotland.

Andrew Peterson is in town!



Andrew Peterson is a singer-songwriter, an author, a filmmaker, and the founder of the Rabbit Room, a ministry dedicated to fostering spiritual formation and Christ-centred community through story, art, and music. He lives in Nashville with his wife and about 80,000 honey bees.

He will be in Edinburgh on 18th August 2023 and doing a concert at 7.30pm at Car-rubbers Christian Centre. For more details and to book go [here](#).

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Tuesday: Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom. Neil Longwe leading.
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Evening Service at 6pm (and live streamed). Neil Longwe preaching.



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