

JESUS-CENTERED REFORMED THEOLOGY

David Fairchild | Lead Pastor of Kaleo Church | San Diego, CA

The Need for Christ-Centered Theology

Every human has a theology. From the clearest explanations of the infinite, to the most bizarre notions of man's imagination to dismiss His existence, one thing is true: we all think thoughts about God, whether accurate or inaccurate.

It then becomes the loving duty of every pastor to see himself as a theologian. This does not mean that we are calling our men to sit in a classroom to argue abstract ideas about God; it means that because the need to understand God is so great in this world, that we of all people must be the clearest in our thoughts and articulation of who God is, what He's done, what He's doing and is promising to do. If we are muddled in our thinking and speaking about God, we will find that our people and God's mission will suffer. Therefore, there is a need for Christ-centered theology.

- **Christ-centered Theology is for God**

In other words, we love theology because in it we learn who God is. He is infinite and personal, the Triune Creator who is both just as well as the justifier. We learn in theology that God does all things according to His own will, for His own purpose, for His own pleasure, and ultimately for the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:7-12). Good theology will see first and foremost its need to think right thoughts about God so that we do not obscure His glory. Good theology must know, seek, and display the beauty and glory of Christ. **This is our motivation.**

- **Christ-centered Theology is for the World**

In theology, we learn of God's attributes and Christ's mission. God is righteous, holy, and just, while at the same time He is merciful, loving, gracious, and the Savior of the world. There is a need for theology in the world since in theology these truths are taught. Without a clear theology of Christ's mission, our future hope, and the saving power of the gospel, we are left without a reason or foundation to love a hurt and broken world. The world has its own theology of God, but it is not in line with the truth of God. Its thoughts about God lead to chaos, wars, destruction, and hopeless despair. Good theology will seek to lovingly teach the world who it is and what Christ has come to restore. Our theology should not only be a theology that seeks God's glory, but a theology of hope for the world in which we live. Good theology is quick to show off Christ's beauty and work, and to tell of His faithfulness to the Father's plan for this world. **This is our mission.**

- **Christ-centered Theology is for the Self**

We learn who we are before Him. We are fallen and broken, hopeless without Him, seeking our own glory. Yet, at the same time, we possess



intrinsic value and dignity since we are made in God's image. Good theology will deal honestly with the self since it is first a revelation of God. We will never know who we truly are until we truly understand who God really is. Good theology will tell the message of hope found only in the gospel. Good theology will explain the horror of man's sin and the value of God's grace. Good theology will be motivated to see every individual learn of this God, know of His plan, and experience the personal hope for salvation found only in the gospel of grace. Good theology will be motivated by God's glory, active to see His glory infect this world, and promiscuous in the pronouncement of the cross-work and victory of Jesus Christ. **This is our message.**

The Flow of Theology

- **Intellect** (Doctrine, History, Facts, Truth, Descriptions, Announcement, the Gospel Proclamation)
- **Affections** (Experiencing our identity, love, delight, desire, passion, longing)
- **Kingdom Living** (Works of love, holiness, character, acts of mercy, justice)

Each aspect flows one to another in a life consumed in worship. They are interdependent and demonstrate the truth of the other. Our knowledge of God can be considered true knowledge only if we are in line with these other truths. For instance, we can not claim to truly "know" God and the facts about Him without loving Him. We can not claim to truly "love" God if we do not demonstrate that love in deed to Him and others. We can not claim to "live" with kingdom values if our values are void of His true identity. We can not experience appropriate emotions for God if we do not know Him as He has revealed Himself, etc.

This flow creates a living theology that is not based upon intellectualism, emotionalism, or legalism. Conversely, this flow keeps us from anti-intellectualism, emotionless faith, or antinomianism. We do not have a middle ground between the two, but something entirely different because we know Jesus who perfectly represents the Father to us (John 14:9).

What we think about God will always determine how we live our lives. Ideas have consequences, therefore, it is vitally important that we think deeply, read widely, and pray intensely when coming to God's Word so that we don't miss the forest for the trees.

Our history is littered with movements, denominations, and churches that have focused on one particular aspect to the exclusion or detriment of the others.

Movements have begun and many have failed when they were not appropriately balanced in their approach to God, self, and the world. Missionary movements have ended in failure because they started off with a commitment to the gospel of grace only to end in a commitment to experience without a balanced commitment to biblical truth. The need for conversions was greater than their need for the true gospel.



Denominations have begun well only to find themselves slipping into denominational pride based upon their “distinctives,” or pride over their “experiences,” or pride over their open and life affirming acts of “mercy.”

Churches have begun well only to close when they find themselves focusing exclusively on the head (intellect), heart (emotions), or the hands (social justice). To be a church that truly loves this world, we must see that Jesus was full of grace AND truth. Grace without truth is not really grace, and truth without grace is not really truth. A church that is theologically healthy will see that its understanding of God can not be disconnected from loving Him and living a life that demonstrates that love.

Additionally, it’s important that we understand that theology is not a cul-de-sac but a movement with a goal. It is not an end in and of itself; it is a way that we understand who God is, what God is doing, and who we are in His history.

This leads us to the goal of theology.

The Goal of Theology – Mission

Theology shows us the flow of history and therefore the mission of God to the world.

If we only study systematic theology, there is a tendency to approach the Bible in a way that is purely for self. We will tend towards an intellectual approach where we break down the Scriptures into compartments or topics to answer apologetic questions or to debate different doctrines. Another way we can err is when we approach the Bible from a position of life improvement or self-help. This leads us to study only those portions of Scripture that teach us how to raise children, become a suitable spouse, improve our financial stewardship, etc. Though we are to come to God’s Word to find out such questions, this is not the main thrust of the Bible.

We must ask ourselves what is the Bible all about? Is it primarily about me or about God? Does it primarily teach me about my life or God’s mission?

The answer is that the Bible is all about God and His glory. It is a true story, non-fiction, that if it had a title might read “God and His Glory” with the subtitle “Getting His glory by saving His people.” This is the drumbeat that keeps time throughout the entirety of Scripture. The Bible is about God and His mission. If we are to be faithful to the Author’s plotline, we must see ourselves as living actors in this great drama of history. We are not stage-props but significant characters that play an integral role in this story.

Systematic theology falls short if it does not also include a robust biblical theology with Christ as its glorious centerpiece. This is why we must be as well versed in our study of redemptive history and biblical theology as we are in our skill with systematic theology.



Acts 29 Theology

Christology (Christ's person and work)

Incarnation:

Exaltation:

Ecclesiology (The identity of the Church)

Why is ecclesiology important to us?

Missiology (The activity of every member of the Church)

Why are we so focused on missiology?

Acts 29 is Ambidextrous (Open Hand/Closed Hand)

Primary Issues:

Secondary Issues:

- We are first, Christians (Nicene and Apostles Creed)
- Second, Evangelicals (National Association of Evangelicals)
- Third, Missional (We believe that God is a Missional God)
- and fourth, Reformed (Sovereign God, Sovereign grace)

Notes: