

## Jason Upchurch - Systematic Theology - Intro and Bibliology - 1 Timothy 4:1-6

This morning we are taking a detour from Mark; we'll be back next week. Don't get too nervous but I want to begin what will likely be a 5-10 year sermon series on Systematic Theology. Every couple of months or so I want to pause and spend a sermon working through a topic of Systematic Theology.

One of the benefits of consecutive expositional preaching like what we do through books of the Bible is that hopefully by the end of the book we understand it very thoroughly and in context. As a pastor, modeling that for you helps you to hopefully take those principles and apply them to your own Bible study as well. Not only do you understand the passages we're studying, but hopefully you learn how to study other passages for yourself.

The one big downside of that approach is that there are so many books in the Bible and issues or topics we won't get to for a long time. And one of those issues is systematic theology. I have a deep love for systematic theology. When I was in college I took a theology course in my first semester and immediately changed my major to theology because I loved it so much.

And I've thought about doing Sunday School or a mid week study. But the reality is that systematic theology is so practical and useful for understanding God and the Christian life that I want all of you to know it.

Anytime someone asks "what does the Bible say about..." they're asking a systematic theology question. What does the Bible say about marriage? God's omnipotence? Angels? Prayer? Predestination? The rapture? Roles of men and women? Government? By God's grace I was able to talk to a Catholic and a Mormon this week about the gospel. You know what we talked about theology. Our statement of faith as a church is essentially a mini systematic theology.

We do systematic theology in real time all the time. The question is: are we doing it well? Are we faithful to the Bible?

So what I want to do is give you basically a Systematic Theology 101 college course over the next 5-10 years or so.

My goal is to be basic enough so that those who are younger and newer to the faith can easily follow along. And I also want this to be practical and affect your day to day life as you walk with God.

So let me give you an idea of where we're going and then dive in.

1) Systematic Theology is basically what the whole Bible teaches about any given topic. That's a very simple and helpful definition by John Frame (cited in *Systematic Theology 2nd Edition*, Wayne Grudem).

It's systematic because it seeks to look at a single issue in the Bible and organize all the data on that issue.

And it's theology because it is the study of what God has revealed to us in the Bible.

Resources: I don't agree with all the content!

- *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem
- *Concise Theology* by J.I. Packer
- *Systematic Theology* by Louis Berkoff

Most people will not actually read through a Systematic Theology. If you do, great. But usually it's a reference work like a dictionary that you only look up occasionally. I have a couple of systematic theologies here if you want to look.

When we're considering systematic theology, we usually break things up into 6 or 7 major categories - and then a whole bunch of sub categories under those.

1. Bibliology - doctrine of the Bible
2. Theology Proper - doctrine about God himself (who is God, what is he like, what he does, trinitarian basics, attributes)
3. Anthropology - doctrine of man (who are we, how were we made, what are we like according to the Bible?)
4. Soteriology - soter in Greek means to save or rescue. So this is the doctrine of salvation - redemption, justification, conversion.
5. Christology and Pneumatology - the doctrine of Christ and the Holy Spirit; different than theology proper because we're looking at the specific roles within the Trinity.
6. Ecclesiology - the doctrine of the church, what is the church, how should a church run, baptism, Lord's Supper, elders, deacons.
7. Eschatology - doctrine of the last things - what happens when someone dies, when will Jesus come back, heaven, hell, millennium.

Those are the 7 big categories that systematic theology usually addresses. Different authors will break those up in different ways, but they usually touch on almost all of those. We'll touch on all of those and each will have 5-6 sermons in each category.

Now, why would anyone spend time on this? Well, the biblical authors themselves spend time on this. The book of Romans is basically a systematic theology - it starts with sin, goes to the nature of salvation, then sanctification, election, Christian ethics. The book of Hebrews is basically a systematic theology comparing the Old Covenant with the New.

There are places in the NT especially where early church sayings and creeds are already becoming commonplace as a way to systematize what Christians believe. The Apostles' Creed was an infant systematic theology. Theology happens because God has wired our brains to think about things in patterns and topics. It's natural.

Here in **1 Timothy** Paul calls theology "doctrine." **Read 1-6**

Doctrine is what the Bible teaches about subjects. And the Bible talks about it constantly. Timothy has doctrine and he's called to set that doctrine before the brothers. That's how he will be a good servant. Like Timothy, as a pastor I am called to teach you doctrine. If I don't teach you doctrine, I'm not a good servant because you won't actually know what the Bible says.

**Rom. 16:17:** watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught.

Paul taught the Romans doctrine, theology, and he expected them to know it well enough that they could be on guard against those who taught contrary.

**Turn to Tit. 1:9.** 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus are called pastoral epistles. They are letters written by Paul to Timothy and Titus who are pastors and the topic is how to be a good pastor. Here we see a list of qualifications for an elder - a pastor. **Read 5-9**

We are called to instruct in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it.

**Tit. 2:1-5:** Titus is to teach all the churches on the island of Crete sound doctrine - systematic theology.

**Tit 2:9-10:** That doctrine will also be adorned by good works. We believe and live the systematic word of God.

**Turn to Heb. 6:1-3.** Here we see that Christians are to be maturing in our doctrine. **Read**

Did you see all the doctrines he listed that we should be solid on?

- The doctrine of Christ - what's that called? Christology.
- The doctrine of repentance.
- The doctrine of faith - salvation is by faith alone.

- Washings - washings were part of the OC Law, knowing the differences between OC and NC was elementary.
- Laying on of hands - how do we publicly recognize leaders?
- Resurrection - of Jesus in salvation but also ours when he comes.
- Judgement - eschatology.

He says these are elementary doctrines. You need to know them, but need to master them and keep learning doctrine. So the call for learning doctrine is all throughout the Bible and it is always aimed at the entire church.

Theology - doctrine - is not pastors and Bible nerds and ivory tower theologians. It's for people in the church. Your kids should know theology. Your grandma should know theology.

There was a movement in the 1900s called the Restoration Movement - the disciples of Christ - who's motto was "No book but the Bible, no creed but Christ." Which sounds nice.

But who is Christ? How do you define him? Is he God? Is he man? Don't look now but you're making a creed. "No book but the Bible" - which Bible? Mormon Bible? Catholic Bible? What's the Bible? What books are in it? Who wrote it? Don't look now, you know what you're doing? Theology.

Now, I just want to make one big point of application before we begin looking at Bibliology this morning. Here's the application: we're doing this study to fuel our worship of Jesus. That's my goal.

My goal is not just to make your brain bigger. My goal is not that you have talking points to hammer home to your friends at camp or family. My goal is that you walk away loving God more because you know him better. The point of theology is doxology: praise and worship.

I say that because when I was in Bible college and seminary I learned theology and I got a big head and became prideful. Knowledge can puff up. That's not what we want.

Our goal should be hearts that are filled to the brim with the knowledge of God and therefore overflow in praise to God and a life of heartfelt obedience.

That's the big picture on what systematic theology is.

## 2) Bibliology

What are we doing this morning? We are beginning to study of the first major section of theology which is bibliology. Bibliology is the study of the Bible. What we're trying to find out is what the Bible says about itself. What can we know about the Bible from the Bible? What does the Bible claim for itself?

And under the heading of bibliology there are a bunch of sub categories that I listed on your outline: inerrancy, inspiration, authority, clarity, sufficiency - those are big words and we'll define them all later.

But before we even get off the ground here, we need to know what it is we hold in our hand. Is this a book of religious opinions? Is this a man made book of patriarchal domination?

If someone asked you "what is the Bible" how would you answer?

What comes to most of our minds is that it is God's Word. Or the Word of God. We could say the Word from God.

And I know we say that all the time, but just stop and think for a minute about the reality that the infinite, holy, creator God of the universe has spoken to us in words that we can understand. We're not left in the dark.

Look down at your Bible. You hold in your hand a thoroughly supernatural book filled with words directly from God Almighty.

**Psalm 19:10–11:** More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

He is infinitely wise, knows all things. We're his finite creatures and yet he has chosen in love and grace to speak to us. Imagine trying to communicate who we are and the nature of the universe to a grasshopper. How is a grasshopper going to possibly understand that? Well, because God is infinite wisdom, he can come down to our level and communicate in a way that we understand.

We're not in the dark about who God is or what he is like or what he has done because he has graciously revealed himself to us.

I mean, there are countless billions of people wandering around the planet searching for meaning and hope and joy. They are wondering if their lives matter or where this all came from and what it all means.

And we actually know. We know because God told us. Not with pictures or signs or feelings but with nouns and verbs and adjectives in poetry and history and commands and wisdom all wrapped up in a little book that is precisely his Word.

This is an amazing reality. God did not have to speak to us. He didn't have to say anything or reveal anything. He could be like the deistic god who just winds up the universe and lets it go. But he cares intimately about us enough to communicate to us.

And so this is God's word. We can think about it on a lot of different levels.

God sometimes actually just writes down his Word - like the 10 commandments on the tablets of stone. The Bible actually refers to the 10 commandments as the 10 words (**Exo. 34:28**).

God also speaks to people: Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, Jonah, so on.

**Turn to Gen. 1.** In **Gen. 1** we have an amazing act of God speaking. **Read 1-8**

So **Gen. 1** is an amazing passage because we have multiple ways in which God's word is manifest. First of all, we have God recorded as speaking these words. Let me ask you something: how do we know God spoke these things? How do we know he said "Let there be light?" Who was there?

Because God tells us that's what he said. God gives an historical account of his own words written down in his Word. So we have audible speech from God that are his Word. Then, we have everything that is recorded in Scripture is God's Word.

Jesus calls the Bible the Word of God, so does Paul, so does John, so does Peter. The Word of God is shorthand for the Bible. **Turn to Psa. 119:9-16.**

There are 3 psalms that are especially dedicated to the Word of God. And we'll end up looking at these as we work through bibliology: **Psalm 1, 19, 119.** Those are 3 psalms that are a treasure trove about the Word of God.

**Psalm 119** is an acrostic poem about God's Word. It uses every letter of the Hebrew alphabet and then has 8 lines exalting the Word of God and in Hebrew each of those lines begins with the letter of the acrostic.

So in **Vss. 9-16** this is under the letter beth - and each line begins with beth, which is like our B. **Read 9-16**

So word, commandment, statute, rule, law...all of this is the Word of God. All of these come from God's mouth. This is his Word.

And so **Psa. 107:11:** says some people rebelled against the Words of God: they rebelled against the Words of God and therefore spurn - they reject - the counsel of the Most High.

If someone has a low view of Scripture or rejects Scripture, who do they really reject? They reject God. Because God reveals himself through Scripture.

I mean just imagine I wrote you a letter and someone read the letter and questioned whether it was even from me or whether or I even existed and even if it was is was ridiculous and not worth paying attention to. What would that say about me?

My words and my heart are in that letter. To reject the letter is to reject me. To reject God's Word is to reject God.

The flip side of that is that we can know for certain what God would actually say about most of the issues in life that matter. I can tell you exactly what God thinks about most political policies. I can tell you exactly what God thinks about the Catholic Church or Muslims or people who say there is no God - can't you?

The unbelieving world doesn't like that - that sounds arrogant to them - but we have exactly what we need because we have God's very words.

So this is the Word of God.

3. Related to this, is the doctrine of inspiration. Turn to 2 Tim. 3:15

If you were here for Sunday School when Chuck took us through the Canon of the New Testament this will be a little bit of a review for you. But inspiration is the Bible teaching that God breathed out the very words we have in our Bible. **Read 14-17**

Some of you in **Vs. 16** have "All Scripture is "inspired" by God or "Given by inspiration of God" which is not really all that helpful because when we say inspiration, we're not saying that the Bible is inspiring in the way that poetry is inspiring, or good writing is inspiring. We're not saying it's inspiring in the way a pep rally or a football coach is inspiring.

Actually the Greek word used here is a made-up word from Paul. Theopneustas - meaning God breathed. It means that the words we have in this book come from directly from God as though he spoke them out. They are superintended by God.

And I'm going to use technical language here because it's important. We believe in *verbal plenary* inspiration. What does that mean?

Verbal inspiration meaning that every letter of the Bible is from God. Every jot and tittle which is the smallest marking in the Hebrew language comes from God.

**Matt 5:18** Jesus says until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. A dot in Hebrew - which the OT was written in - is the smallest letter stroke that differentiates letters. An iota is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet.

Jesus is saying that down to the very letters everything will be fulfilled because it's all from God.

Jesus even makes arguments based verb tenses. How does Jesus know the dead are raised? Because God said "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." God didn't say I was, he said I am.

We are talking about verbal minutiae and Jesus anchors his argument on it like it's massive slab of granite and he's going theological rock climbing to defend the resurrection. Every jot and tittle and alpha and omega and beth and lamedh are God breathed, are inspired.

So we believe in verbal inspiration, we also believe in plenary inspiration. What is that? It's the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. All of the Bible - all 66 books - are breathed out by God.

I don't know how many times I've heard people say "Well Jesus didn't say anything about homosexuality" - yes he did. He talked about in Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus and Judges and Romans and 1 Corinthians. "Those aren't red letters!" So? Were they breathed out by God? Of course. Do you get that the whole Bible is red-letter? It's all from God, it's from Jesus, it's all by super intention of the Spirit.

And this is important - it doesn't come up as often as it used to but it's still worth noting. The Bible doesn't contain the Word of God. This used to be a big thing: the Bible contains the Word of God. It's in here somewhere, we just have to go find it and figure out which of it is God's Word.

No, the Bible does not contain God's Word - as though we get to decide. The Bible is God's word whether we acknowledge it or not because God breathed it out.

Now, a couple thoughts on this passage. First, did you notice in **Vs 15** Paul says these sacred writings Timothy has known from childhood are able to make people wise for salvation? What's he talking about? He's talking about the OT. The OT Scriptures - used rightly - can lead someone to faith in Jesus because they all point to him.

Also, Timothy was trained in the Scriptures from childhood. Believers should begin teaching the sacred writings that are from God to their children as early as possible because they make one wise for salvation. It is never too early or too late to teach your kids the Word.

Also, all Scripture is profitable for us. **Read 16-17**

Everything we need for the Christian life can be found in the Scriptures. We don't need outside information to help us understand how we live our lives. Scripture can be used by all believers for teaching, correcting, rebuking and reproof for a righteous life.

If you don't know the Scriptures not only are you not growing, but you're also not able to help other believers grow either. Because God uses his word through us to help one another. Actually look at what Paul says.

**Read 17**

Because this comes from the mouth of God, we can actually be complete and equipped for every good work.

Now, how did this happen? How did the words get from God to us? God didn't just drop the Bible out of heaven complete with leather binding and concordance. How did he pass it from him to us?

**Turn to 2 Pet. 1.** This is another critical passage for us to understand in the discussion on inspiration. How did God use men to give his Word? We're not 100% sure how that happened. In the case of the 10 Commandments, he literally inscribed it on stone.

But what about the rest? Did God just tell the authors what to write word-for-word? That's called the dictation theory. That's probably not true because if were like that it would all seem the same. But we see differences in the writings. How the apostle John writes is very different than how Paul writes. Peter's writings are very complex, whereas Mark is pretty simple.

Did God write a word and Moses write a word - back and forth? Again probably not. Look how Peter describes it. He talks here about when he saw the glory of Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration. **Read 16-18**

Peter says we were there when the glory of Jesus was revealed and we heard God's voice from heaven. It was amazing! I was there! But you know what? Peter says there is something even more sure than his own experience. **Read 19-21**

This is amazing. What Peter is saying is that the Word of God written down is more sure than even his own experience on the Mt. of Transfiguration seeing the glory of Jesus and hearing the voice of the Father from

heaven. That glorious revelation to Peter pales in comparison to the awesome majesty of what we hold in our hands: the prophetic word that we can shine like a bonfire in the pitch black world.

Many times people want to hear from God audibly or in a dream; they want some supernatural experience to make them feel closer to God. Peter says no. This Word we hold in our hands is more sure than any experience we could ever have, even if the experience was legit. Why?

Because the Scripture is not based on someone's own interpretation. It's not personal and subjective. It's not forgotten or twisted or distorted over time. It's the most objective reality in the universe because it comes from God.

And he says, it wasn't produced by the will of man. Paul never sat down and thought, "You know what I'm going to do this Tuesday? I'm going to write down some Scripture." Never happened. Paul and Moses and Nehemiah and Micah and Zephaniah wrote Scripture when God superintended them by the Holy Spirit to write Scripture. **Read 21**

They wrote when God willed. And when he willed to write Scripture the Holy Spirit carried them along to write it down. The word carried along means to cause to follow a certain course in direction. It's like wind in the sails of a ship, but with clear direction.

And it seems like the authors were aware of when this happened. John says in **Rev. 1:10** was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. "Hey last Sunday I was sitting there on Patmos and the Spirit moved me to see visions and write them down."

Sometimes the authors researched for years before writing something down, like Luke's gospel and Acts. Sometimes it was little bits collected over decades like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Samuel and Kings. Sometimes the author planned to write more but couldn't like Jude and 2/3 John. But what they wrote was always from God.

They themselves were not perfect or infallible. Moses sinned and wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land. Peter and Barnabas denied gentiles entrance into the church. David wrote many psalms but was a murderer and adulterer. But God still used his Spirit to guide those men and others to write his perfect Word.

Why did he do that? **Turn to John 17**. This is Jesus praying the night before he was crucified. And he's praying for his disciples and for all of his followers. For you and for me. Look closely at what he prays. **Read 14-21**

If you could ask Jesus one question: Jesus what do you want for my life? You know what he'd say? It's the same thing he prays: be sanctified in the truth, your word is truth.

This is how we will shine in the world. This is how the world will know Jesus was sent from the Father: when we come to the Word of God, read the Word of God, submit to the Word, proclaim the Word of God, for the glory of God. **Pray**