APPLIED THEOLOGY CONCEPTS SERIES

Part One:* "What is Theology?" - *Complete Study Guide

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1. Introduction to Applied Theology

Welcome to Part One of the Applied Theology Concepts Series. In this foundational study, we explore why sound biblical doctrine is not just academic theory, but a practical, life-shaping framework for everyday Christian living.

Core Definition: The word theology comes from two Greek words: Theos (God) and Logos (words/discourse). Theology literally means words about God—the truths and doctrines God has revealed so we can know Him intimately and walk in His truth.

What we believe about God and His Word directly dictates how we interpret life (our hermeneutic) and how we apply truth to our daily decisions. Sound theology keeps us anchored in biblical truth rather than cultural shifts or subjective human preferences.

2. The Three H's of Christian Theology

True theological reflection is designed to impact every area of our existence, summarized by Daniel Akin and others through the three H's:

- **Head (Cognitive):** Informs our understanding, thinking, and mental grasp of divine truth.
- **Heart (Affective):** Shapes our affections, love for God, and emotional disposition.
- **Hands (Outworking):** Guides our daily actions, ethics, and participation in God's mission.

3. Biblical Mandate: 1 Timothy 6:2-5

The Apostle Paul instructs his young protégé Timothy regarding sound doctrine and its vital connection to godly living.

1 Timothy 6:2-5:
"These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing..."

In this passage, Paul highlights critical active verbs and concepts for ministry:

- **Teach (Didasko):** Imparting systematic instruction in truth in a clear, didactic manner.
- **Exhort (Parakaleo):** Coming alongside believers with wholesome, healthy words to encourage and help them apply doctrine to everyday life.
- **Doctrine (Didaskalia):** The unified body of teaching revealed by God that naturally fosters godliness.

4. What is Biblical Theology? (Charles Ryrie's Framework)

Biblical theology is the branch of theological science that systematically deals with the historically conditioned progress of God's self-revelation deposited in the Bible. Renowned theologian Charles Ryrie outlines four key characteristics:

- **Systematic in Form:** Organized into a structured framework of coherent doctrines.
- **Embodied in History & Communicated Through Men:** Grounded in real historical events, with holy men speaking as moved by the Holy Spirit.
- **Investigates Stages of Doctrinal Development:** Tracing how God's progressive revelation unfolds across redemptive history.
- **Scripture as the Sole Source:** Our theology comes exclusively from the Bible—not from dreams, modern cultural trends, or personal preferences.

5. The Ten Major Fields of Bible Doctrine

Systematic theology is organized into ten major fields, providing a manageable framework to study the whole counsel of God:

Field	Primary Focus & Key Concepts
1. Bibliology	The study of the Bible: divine inspiration, authority, revelation, canon, and the inerrancy of original autographs.
2. Theology Proper	The study of God the Father: His existence, attributes, character, and role within the Trinity.

3. Christology	The study of Jesus Christ: pre-existence, incarnation, hypostatic union (fully God, fully man), life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
4. Pneumatology	The study of the Holy Spirit: His deity, personality, convicting and regenerating work, and empowerment of believers.
5. Anthropology	The study of humanity: creation in the image of God (Imago Dei) and human constitutional nature (body, soul, spirit).
6. Hamartiology	The study of sin: its origin, nature, transmission through the Fall, and consequences on creation and humanity.
7. Soteriology	The study of salvation: grace, repentance, faith, justification, sanctification, and glorification.
8. Angelology	The study of angelic beings: holy angels, fallen angels, demons, and Satan's ultimate defeat.
9. Ecclesiology	The study of the church: its origin, purpose, organization, ordinances, and role as Christ's body.
10. Eschatology	The study of end times: death, intermediate state, the second coming of Christ, final judgment, and the eternal state.

6. In-Depth Study & Discussion Questions

Use these ten in-depth questions for personal journaling, small group study, or classroom discussion:

1. **Bridging Theory and Practice:** How does compartmentalizing theology (treating it as an academic or Sunday-only exercise) negatively impact a believer's daily decision-making, emotional resilience, and ethics on a Monday morning?

2. **The Power of Definitions:** The word theology breaks down into Theos (God) and Logos (words/discourse). Why is it vital to understand that theology consists of God's revealed words about Himself rather than our subjective human ideas or preferences?

3. **The Three H's (Head, Heart, and Hands):** Review the triad of Head (cognitive), Heart (affective), and Hands (outworking). Give a specific, real-life example of how studying a deep biblical doctrine should simultaneously transform what you think, what you love, and how you act.

4. **Contextualizing 1 Timothy 6:2-5:** Based on the original Greek terms didasko (teaching) and parakaleo (exhorting/coming alongside), how should pastors and ministry leaders balance rigorous doctrinal instruction with pastoral encouragement?

5. **Guarding Against Modern Revisionism:** How does a firm commitment to a closed canon (Bibliology) protect the church from modern novelties, subjective spiritual claims, and cultural drift?

6. **Charles Ryrie's Framework:** Why is it important to recognize that God's self-revelation unfolded progressively across historical redemptive epochs rather than appearing all at once?

7. **Evaluating the Ten Major Fields:** Looking at the 10 major fields of systematic theology, which field do you believe is most frequently neglected in modern Christian culture, and what are the spiritual consequences of that neglect?

8. **Hermeneutics and Worldview:** What role does a person's hermeneutic (their method of interpreting Scripture) play in shaping their theology, and how can an inconsistent hermeneutic lead to conflicting conclusions?

9. **The Goal of Knowing God:** How does the study of doctrine shift our relationship with God from knowing about Him to intimately knowing Him beyond what general revelation in nature provides?

10. **Apologetics and Cultural Engagement:** As part of the Truth Defended ministry, how does mastering applied theology equip believers to give a confident, reasoned defense of the Christian faith in a culture that devalues absolute truth?

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