Introduction

• Theology: what, who, why?
• Contextual nature of theology
• Knowing God
• Arguments for the existence of God
• The nature of Scripture

Theology: What, Who, Why?

• This course is theology, not counseling.
• Theology = theos + logos = study of God.
• Grenz (15): “the systematic reflection on, and articulation of, the fundamental beliefs we share as followers of Jesus Christ.”
• Term “theology” used in two ways:
  – For the study of the doctrine of God.
  – For the study of all Christian doctrine.

Theology: What, Who, Why?

Practical Theology
Systematic Theology
Historical Theology
Biblical Theology
Biblical Exegesis
Higher Criticism
Lower Criticism
Canon
Theology: What, Who, Why?

• This course is systematic theology.
• It’s an attempt to do theology for counselors, not to do a theology of counseling.
• Show how theology is relevant to counseling.

Theology: What, Who, Why?

• See topics on Grenz page 15. Others:
  – Bibliology = study of Scripture.
  – Hamartiology = study of sin.
  – Soteriology = study of salvation.
• He discusses these but doesn’t give them their own headings.

Theology: What, Who, Why?

• Who is your most important theologian?
  – Every believer is a theologian.
  – We do theology formally and informally.
  – We have “implicit, unexamined theologies” by which we live our lives.
  – We teach theology through our practices.
  – The only question is whether our theology is good theology - self-aware, biblically sound, self-consistent, edifying.
Theology: What, Who, Why?

- Why do we need Christian theology?
  - To love God with our minds (Mk. 12:30).
  - To pass on our faith (2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:15-16).
  - To build up people to maturity (Eph. 4:11-16).
  - To distinguish truth from falsehood (Titus 1:9).
  - To inform our Christian lives (1 Tim. 1:3-5).
  - For the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2).
  - As a source of life transformation (Jas. 1:22-25)

Theology: What, Who, Why?

- Why is theology important for counseling?

- It’s a human construct based on revelation.
  - Our knowledge is true but partial.
  - Theology is never final in this life.
  - Acknowledge paradox and mystery.
  - Don’t go further than Scripture.
  - Humility is a requirement.
Contextual Nature of Theology

- Theology is contextual.
- Influenced by culture and faith tradition.
- Reflects the theologian who writes it.
- This is why there are so many systematic theologies and why they date so quickly.
- So ask WHOSE systematic theology?

Contextual Nature of Theology

- Dialogue between kerygma and context.

  kerygma  context
  biblical message  contemporary culture

- Must be faithful to the kerygma.
- Must be relevant to the context.
- Make gospel understandable, not acceptable.

Contextual Nature of Theology

- Presuppositions of this course:
  - Grenz: Evangelical and Baptist.
  - Me: Anabaptist, Arminian, Evangelical.
  - Broadly evangelical approach.
  - Share insights from our traditions.
Contextual Nature of Theology

- Sources and norms
  - Source: where do we get our material?
  - Norm: by what do we validate our theology?
- Sources: Bible, tradition, contemporary issues, insights from other disciplines, etc.
- Possible norms: Scripture, tradition, reason, experience.

Grenz lists three sources/norms:
- Biblical message (primary)
- Theological heritage/tradition (secondary)
- Thought-forms of our culture (tertiary)

Tom Finger:
- Scripture is the norm of the truth of theology.
- Contemporary culture is the norm of its intelligibility.
- What are your sources and norms for counseling?

Knowing God

- Why is knowing God relevant to counseling?
- Knowing God isn’t like this…
Knowing God

- Knowing God isn’t like knowing information.
  - God is subject, not object.
  - It’s more like knowing a person.
  - We don’t master God; we yield to him in order to know him.
  - God’s knowledge of us precedes and is the foundation for our knowledge of him.
  - God must disclose himself to us = revelation.
  - Revelation = how do we know what’s true?

Knowing God

- Revelation = God’s self-disclosure.
- General revelation = God’s self-disclosure available to all people everywhere through use of reason. General knowledge of God.
- Special revelation = God’s self-disclosure communicated supernaturally to specific persons on specific occasions. Specific knowledge of God’s character and will, including salvation.
Arguments for God’s Existence

• Ontological argument (Anselm)
  – Ontology = being
  – Existence is required by the idea of God.
  – God is the greatest conceivable being.
  – A being that exists is greater than a being that does not exist.
  – To be the greatest of all possible beings, God must exist.

Arguments for God’s Existence

• Ontological argument (Anselm)
• Cosmological argument (Aquinas)
  – In our world, we see one thing causes another.
  – Something must have started the chain of causes.
  – God is the Uncaused Cause who started the chain of causation in the universe.

Arguments for God’s Existence

• Ontological argument (Anselm)
• Cosmological argument (Aquinas)
• Teleological argument (Aquinas)
  – The universe demonstrates purposeful order.
  – Purpose requires intelligence.
  – Telos = goal.
  – Argument from design.
  – Watchmaker analogy (a watch requires a maker).
Arguments for God’s Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm)
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas)
- Teleological argument (Aquinas)
- Anthropological or moral argument (Kant)
  - Based on human moral sense.
  - We have a moral imperative that often isn’t rewarded in this life.
  - This imperative must come from someone and must be rewarded in an afterlife.

Arguments for God’s Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm)
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas)
- Teleological argument (Aquinas)
- Anthropological or moral argument
  - Modern version of this argument uses terms like self-transcendence and openness to the world; human desire for self-transcendence must have a transcendent origin.
  - Pascal’s “God-shaped vacuum” in human hearts.

Arguments for God’s Existence

- How might these arguments be useful?
  - Some find them helpful in evangelism.
  - Confirm faith of believers; show them that the faith is intellectually credible.
  - Anthropological argument tells us about the human condition.
The Nature of Scripture

- Grenz emphasizes link with Holy Spirit.
  - The Spirit brought the Bible into existence.
  - The Spirit interprets the Bible to us.
- Inspiration - Spirit’s guidance of authors.
  - Writers and compilers (2 Pet. 1:21).
  - Also applies to finished product (2 Tim 3:16).
- Illumination - Spirit’s guidance of audience.
  - Enables understanding (1 Cor. 2:6-16; 2 Cor. 4:4-6).
  - Guides into truth (John 14:26).

- Plenary inspiration = whole of Scripture.
- Verbal inspiration = extends to the words.
  - Not simple dictation.
  - Words convey meaning God intended.

- Grenz: authority of Bible comes from Spirit.
  - Holy Spirit speaks through it.
  - Both study and prayer are necessary.
- Keep Word and Spirit together.
The Nature of Scripture

• Anabaptists:
  
  Inner Word (Holy Spirit) → Living Word (Jesus Christ)
  Outer Word (Scripture)

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The Nature of Scripture

• Authority of Scripture is based on its witness to Christ.
  – He is the living Word of God (John 1:1-14).
  – A high view of Scripture isn’t enough (John 5:39-40).

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The Nature of Scripture

• Affirm Scripture as a divine/human book.
  – G. E. Ladd: the Bible is the word of God in the words of human beings in history.
  – 2 Peter 1:21 – God moved, people spoke.
  – 2 Peter 3:15-16 – Paul wrote Scripture.
The Nature of Scripture

• How the Bible functions as authority:
  – It’s the foundational document for our faith and for Christian identity.
  – Provides an interpretive framework for understanding our lives. The Spirit uses Scripture to shape our identity and help us interpret the world.
  – Ultimate purpose is spiritual formation.
  – It brings us into relationship with Christ.
  – Biblical authority in a counseling situation?

Al and Mary Ann come to you with marriage problems. They are Christians, and they have been married for three years. They often experience conflict over financial issues and their sexual relationship. Mary Ann is anxious. She believes that Christian marriages should not have conflict, and she wonders if their conflict means that she isn’t being a good wife. Al often tells her about her inadequacy. But she also thinks that they should use their money in a way that is more honoring to God; instead of spending so much, they should save more or give more to the church. Also, she is often very tired after a day at work, followed by housework. But Al gets angry if she says she isn’t in the mood for sex.

Al says that the problems in their marriage come from Mary Ann’s lack of submission. As the spiritual leader of the home, he should make the financial decisions. In their sexual relationship, 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 says that he has authority over his wife’s body, so she should not refuse him. Paul is very clear in Ephesians 5:22-27 that husbands are to direct their wives’ spiritual lives, and their wives are to submit to them in everything. Furthermore, the Old Testament teaches that the man is the priest of his home (see Job 1:5), so he should determine God’s will for his family. Mary Ann can approach God only through him.