Lecture 04 – Doing Theology: How do we know?

How do we know anything?

What are the four typical sources of theology? Are these valid sources? Why or why not?
Should one or some of these sources be given more authority than others? Why?
What typically happened when these authorities became out of order? How can we protect ourselves from repeating those kinds of mistakes?
What are the symptoms of making tradition the primary authority? What is the danger of making tradition the primary authority? Why is that harmful?
What are the signs that human reason has been given inappropriate authority in theology?
What kind of approaches to human reason are dangerous? What is the cause of these bad approaches? What are the bad results caused by them? Why should we avoid them?
What are the symptoms of making experience or social group the authority of theology? What dangers does this approach lead to? How can we avoid those dangers? What does this tell us about the need for a "crap detector"?
Describe the approach the lecture recommends as the best approach? What evidence is given that this approach is better than the alternatives? Do you agree? What difference does this make for the way you should approach theology?
How does the best approach use the other three typical sources? How can we keep these things in their proper relationship?
How does the best approach help us to understand and use tradition, reason, and experience well? How does it protect us from the misuse of these sources?

Reason, Tradition, and Experience?

What are the two ways to understand "reason"? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of either approach? How does this distinction help us to understand the task of theology? How does it help us to actually do theology well?
What are the two general types of tradition? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of either approach? How does this distinction help us to understand the task of theology? How does it help us to actually do theology well?
What are the two general approaches to experience? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of either approach? How does this distinction help us to understand the task of theology? How does it help us to actually do theology well?
What is the underlying issue to all of these distinctions? Why does that matter? How does this apply to the task of doing theology well?

Faith and Understanding

What is the ideal relationship between believing and understanding? How can you cultivate this relationship in your own life and ministry?
How is theology like testing if a TV works? How does that illustration help us to do theology well?
What is the most fundamental reality for doing theology well? What practical results should this have for our theology?

Blind Leap of Faith?

Describe the two ways to respond to the accusation of a "blind faith" in your own words. Why are these concepts important? How can we apply them in our life and ministry?

The Choice

What are the two possible ultimate foundations for knowledge? What is the evidence for the trustworthiness of either option? Which do you think is the better option and why? What practical implications should this have for everyday life?

The Scripture

What does it mean for the Bible to be our primary, functional authority? What does it look like if the Bible is our primary authority? What does it look like if the Bible is our functional authority? How can we put this insight into practice?

What are the practical implications of failure to keep the Bible as the primary, functional authority? How can we avoid these?

Challenging Questions

Describe why each of these questions is important. What consequences does our answer to each of these questions have for the way we live our lives? What kinds of results should we reasonably expect from the various answers we could give?

What is the underlying issues to all of these questions? How does this apply?

Summary:

Review the proper authority and approach to theology and how this applies to Christian life and ministry.

Therefore:

Think through what difference this makes for your own practice of theology, your discipleship, and your ministry.