



# **Moving from Scripture to Theology and Practice**

A Forum on Gender, Sexuality, and Faith

# Where we are going

- What is the Bible?
- What is doctrine? Theology?
- How does one move from Scripture to theology and practice?



# What is the Bible?



1) The Bible is not a handbook or a set of rules; it is a multi-vocal, narrative witness to God's work with a particular people in a particular time.

**a. Multivocal** – this key aspect is silenced in inerrancy

**b. Narrative** – An overarching story made up of different stories

**c. Contextual** – Tied strongly to an ancient people in their ancient context



# What is the Bible?

- 2) The Bible teaches us about what the authors and first audiences thought (**their theology**); the stories, laws, poetry, wisdom, and letters helped them live in their world as God's people and Jesus followers (**their practice**). **Ex: 1 Cor 15:36**
  
- 3) We all read the Bible with **lenses**—worldview, biases, presuppositions and preunderstandings. These shape and guide our interpretation so we must make ourselves aware of these!  
**Ex: Numbers 12:1-2**

# What is the Bible?



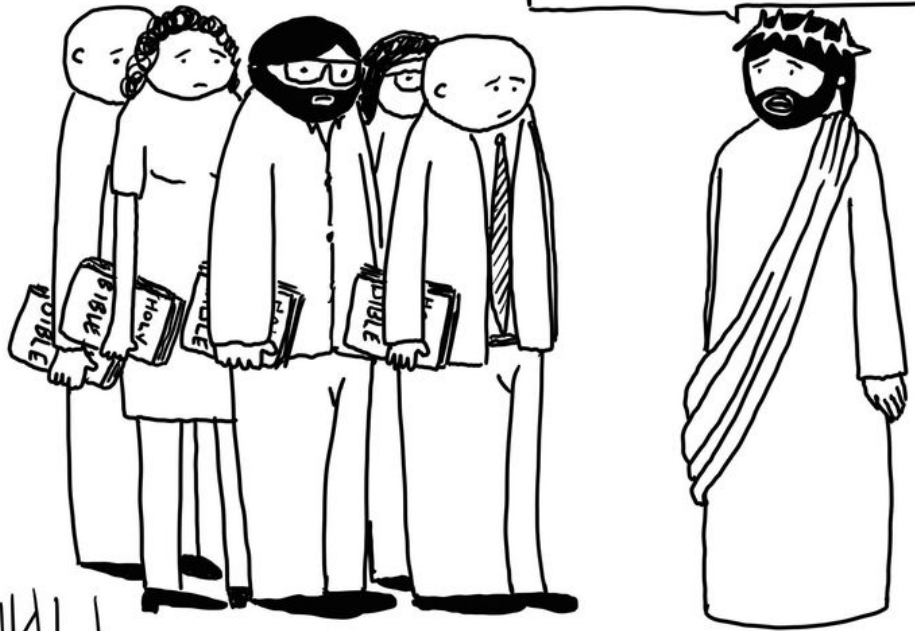
- 4) As we read and try to understand how ancient Israel and then first century Christians lived, learned, and changed, we come to understand the character and work of God, the nature of humanity, and the message and meaning of Jesus's life.**
  
- 5) The journey to understanding the character and work of God does not involve merely following a set a rules or quoting certain verses; it involves letting the story of Scripture and the life of Jesus shape us.**

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME IS YOU USE SCRIPTURE TO DETERMINE WHAT LOVE MEANS AND I USE LOVE TO DETERMINE WHAT SCRIPTURE MEANS.



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# What is Doctrine?

**Statements of systematic theology drawn from a diversity of passages the Bible and read in light of a particular religious tradition to serve as a foundation for a community of faith.**

**Note: The Bible does not teach a doctrine of anything—not the trinity, creation, incarnation, salvation or atonement**

**Ex: doctrine of atonement**



# What is Doctrine? Theology?

●  
Doctrine always involves dismissing or qualifying the Bible's multi-vocality

Inerrancy

●  
Doctrine has been processed, worked over, and developed over the centuries

Trinity

●  
Doctrine has been shaped by tradition, culture, and men who are in leadership

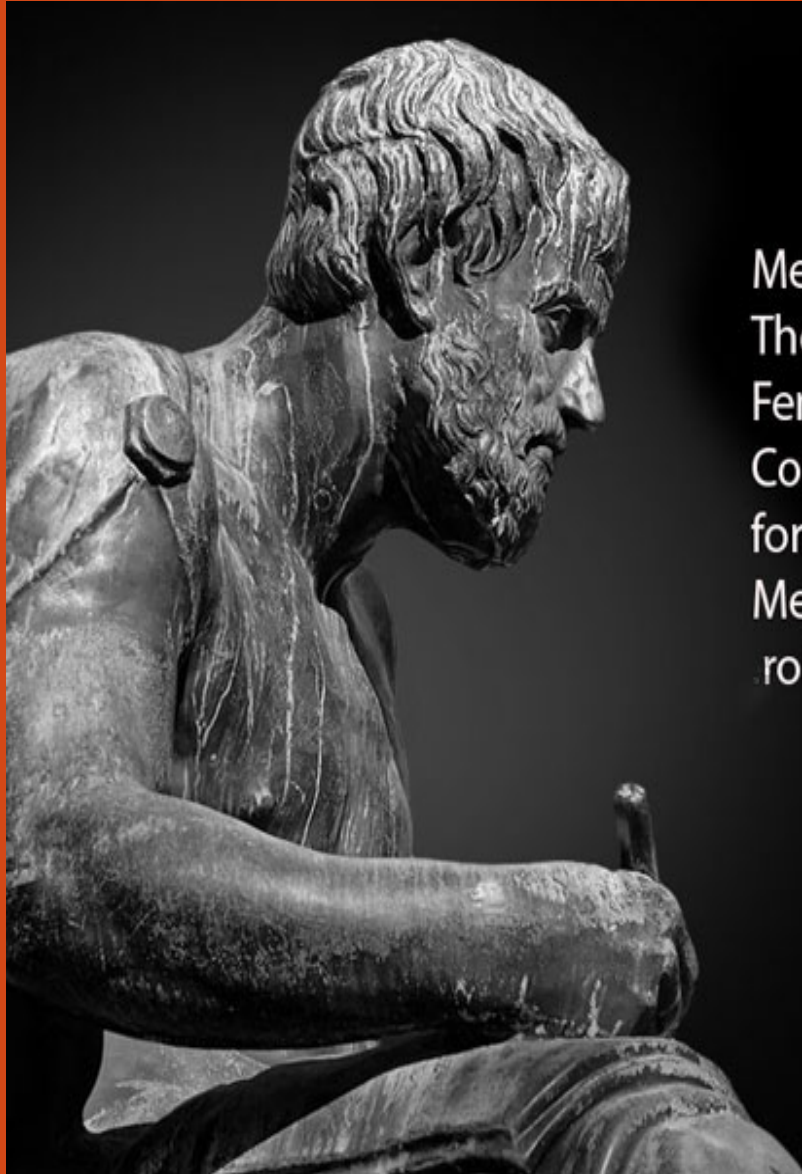
Marriage

●  
Doctrine reflects a society's values and is limited by it

Aristotle on Women

●  
Doctrine is not always that same as theology. Doctrine can be more institutional, theology can be personal





## Aristotle on Woman

Men have more teeth than women  
The female is, as it were, a mutilated male  
Females are weaker and colder in nature  
Compared to men, women are immature, deficient, de-  
formed; they are even a bit monstrous  
Men have hotter blood than women, a more important  
role in reproduction, and are generally more perfect

– *Aristotle*

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# *Test Case: Women in ministry*

## **Southern Baptist Doctrine**

**“[The Church’s] two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/ overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”**

***2000 Baptist Faith and Message, amended 2023***

## **Catholic Doctrine**

**In the Catholic Christian doctrine, women are not permitted to be ordained as priests of the church because priests are supposed to represent the likeness of Jesus, a male figure. The “teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal tradition of the Church.”**

***Ordinatio Sacerdotalis 4***

## **CBF Conviction**

**The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship holds deeply the conviction that God calls women to all places of leadership and service in the lives of congregations and in our denominational community. We believe this conviction rises from the Scriptures and has been confirmed time and time again by the work of the Holy Spirit in calling and gifting women for preaching, pastoral leadership and other forms of ministry.**



# MOVING FROM SCRIPTURE TO THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

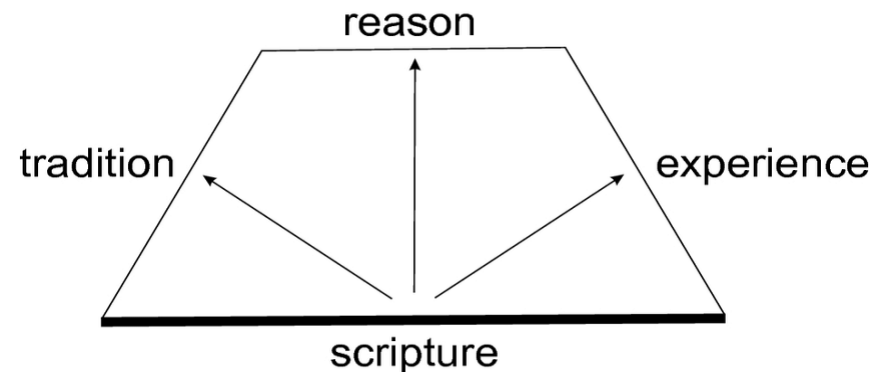
## Foundational Assumptions:

- 1) There is not one “theology” taught by the Bible; there are many theological ideas expressed for the people of God (about God’s character, God’s relationship with humanity, human participation in God’s kingdom); these are being developed in their contexts but they are all still in flux and exist in a diversity of expressions
- 2) Interpreters must have a consistent way to construct theology from the biblical messages
- 3) Theology helps someone think “Christianly” or “in a Christ-like way” about ethical convictions and practices, shaping a person's worldview and providing a framework for reasoning/thinking and acting

# Ways People have moved from Scripture to Theology


**Naively claim they are following the Bible but in actuality, pick and choose which pieces to focus on according to their own presuppositions, traditions, or opinions**

**Use the Wesleyan Quadrilateral**



**Pay attention to the movement of God in the Bible and trajectories that are established (e.g. slavery)**

**Center theology on a “canon within the canon” or a key biblical theme/teaching (Jesus’s life and ministry in the Gospels, Love God/love neighbor and enemy, upside-down kingdom)**



**“No theology is strictly speaking timeless. All theology has a historical and cultural context, including the theology of the biblical writers. And that is good news, for it gives us permission to accept the responsibility to think through what it means for God to be present now.”**

**Pete Enns**



**My Journey  
of LGBTQ +  
Affirmation**

# Questions to consider :

- What does it look like for God to be present in my life and my church when it comes to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ folks?
- How might I live like Jesus in the world when I consider my words and actions concerning gender and sexuality?
- How might individuals and churches go about developing a theology of sexuality and marriage when the ancient context of the Bible is so far removed from our context? Do we need a specific theology around this at all?
- Which theologies and practices in our society have been most harmful to LGBTQ+ folks and other vulnerable people? Which have been most loving and lifegiving?
- What personal opinions, traditions, or preunderstandings am I willing to reexamine for my faith community to pursue a more welcoming and affirming stance on LGBTQ+ inclusion?



# Resources

