

Practical Theology

by Al Troester

There are many doctrinal courses taught in our schools and seminaries. These are all known as theology. In other words, there is the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of sin (harmitology), the doctrine of salvation (soteriology), the doctrine of angels, and so on; but a doctrinal course in practical theology, that is the theology of practical Christian living is often missing. A believer can be straight in doctrinal soundness; but often, we may fight for this as we should in contending for the faith, but we can be off in practical Christian living. The book of James says that "faith without works is dead" (2:20) and likewise exhorts, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). A person could well make an "A" in the doctrine of Christ, but an "F" in the doctrine of everyday living. It is possible to get all wrapped up in theological differences today and fail to get involved in how to do the everyday practical things in living as a Christian. We need to give some real thought to the practical things that pertain to our faith. If our doctrine does not make a difference in our living, we need to check up on our doctrine. We confess the Bible to be our book of faith and practice, and, for sure, we ought to heavily practice as well as have faith. Doctrine and duty should go hand in hand. How one lives should be an outgrowth of what one believes.

Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ are to live under the authority of the Word of God. We are not free in Christ to do as we please, but set at liberty from bondage to do as would please Him. In no place is this more revealing than in everyday living in all of its many facets. A Christian is a Christian wherever he or she may be, and should reveal it in manner of life. To live otherwise is hypocritical and contradictory to our faith in Christ. These practical helps are instructions from the Word of God.

In these worldly, fleshly days of materialistic, self-centered living, consider some practical things we are to do. They are all put on the lower shelf so we can all reach them.

I. Practical living in our daily conduct.

1. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2, 3).
2. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).
3. "Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the

ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:17-19).

4. "...put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22).
5. "...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor..." (Eph. 4:24, 25).
6. "Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26).
7. "Let him that stole steal no more..." (Eph. 4:28).
8. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).
9. "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).
10. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31, 32).
11. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children...walk in love...but fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints...neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient..." (Eph. 5:1-4).
12. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15, 16).
13. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess: but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).
14. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).
15. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9-11).
16. "Do all things without murmurings..." (Phil. 2:14).
17. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say Rejoice: (Phil. 4:4).

18. "...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).
19. Beware:
 - "of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).
 - "of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).
 - "of false prophets" (Mt. 7:15).
 - "of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision (Phil. 3:2).
 - "lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).
 - "lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness" (II Pet. 3:17).
20. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:16).
21. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (I Peter 2:2).
22. "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Pet. 2:11)
23. "...if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but glorify God on this behalf" (I Pet. 4:16).
24. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7).
25. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8).

2. Practical theology for the home.

It has been said that Christianity begins at home. It is the best place to begin practicing it. Make it practical.

1. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21).
2. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). "...ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (I Peter 3:1, 2).
3. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (I Pet. 3:7).
 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church" (Eph. 5:25).

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies..." (Eph. 5:28).

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3:19).

4. "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. 3:20).

—"Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3).

—"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

—"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. 1:8).

—"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

—"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15)

—"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (Prov. 23:13).

3. Practical things for the marriage, too, are in the Bible.

1. God ordained it—"And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18).

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD" (Prov. 18:22).

"...a prudent wife is from the LORD" (Prov. 19:14).

"...from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh; so they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:6-9)

—therefore, no divorce.

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11, 12).

"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39).

4. Practical theology for young people.

Young people are just as responsible to live for Christ as are older people. Temptations may not be the same in all particulars, but are the same as to their commonality—such as the "lust of the flesh", "the lust of the eyes", and "the pride of life." Satan may seek to deceive young people and make right seem wrong and wrong seem right, but the Holy Spirit will guide the conscience with the daily use of the Word of God and prayer.

1. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother (Prov. 1:8).
 2. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10).
 3. Don't follow the crowd. "If they say, Come with us...cast in thy lot among us...my son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path" (Prov. 1:11-15).
 4. God holds you accountable for your manner of life. "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecc. 11:9). "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecc. 12:1).
 5. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5,6). You do not have to live in fear and frustration and uncertainty when you walk with the Lord in honesty and sincerity.
 6. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2).
 7. Keep yourself clean. The body is not for fornication (illicit, unlawful, unbiblical sex sins) but for the Lord. "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord" (I Cor. 6:13). "If a man therefore purge himself...he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use" (II Tim. 2:21). "Flee also youthful lusts" (II Tim. 2:22).
 8. Don't be ashamed of being a Christian (I Peter 4:16).
 9. Go to church regularly. (Hebrews 10:25).
 10. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12).
 11. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119:9).
5. Practical theology in attending church.
1. Don't forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb.10:25).
 2. Give financially to the work. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Cor. 16:2).
 3. Submit to those in authority over you (Hebrews 13:17).

4. Respect your leaders. "Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thess. 5:13).
6. Practical theology to the government.
 1. "Submit" (I Pet. 2:13-15) (Titus 3:1) (Rom. 13:1-5).
 2. Pray for those in authority (I Tim. 2:1-4). This is very vital in these days of world turmoil and sin in high places.
 3. Pay your taxes (Rom. 13:6,7)
7. Practical theology to the poor and widows.
 1. Visit them (James 1:27)
 2. Honour widows (I Tim. 5:3-10).
 3. "For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." (Deut. 15:11).
"Remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10)
"A contribution for the poor saints" (Rom.15:26).
8. Practical theology in dealing with the unsaved.
 1. "Witness" to them (Acts 1:8).
 2. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven" (Mt. 5:16).
 3. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).
 4. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord" (II Cor. 6:14-18).
 5. We are saved "out of the world" (John 17:6), "in the world" (17:11), "not of the world" (17:14), but "sent to the world" (17:18), "that the world may believe that thou has sent me" (17:21).
 6. "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Mt. 5:13).
 7. "Ye are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14-16).
 8. "We are ambassadors for Christ" (II Cor. 5:20) to bid the unsaved to be reconciled to God.
 9. "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (I Cor. 15:34)
9. Practical theology to those you may work under.

1. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord whether he be bond or free" (Eph. 6:5-8).
2. "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things: not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Tit. 2:9, 10).
3. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (I Pet. 2:18, 19).

10. Practical theology concerning finances.

1. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8).
2. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).
3. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19, 20).
4. Read chapters 8 and 9 of II Corinthians concerning giving. "Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (II Cor. 9:7, 8).
5. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings...Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:8-10).

11. Practical theology concerning how to treat fellow Christians.

1. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (Jn. 13:34)
2. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

3. "Be of the same mind one toward another" (Rom.12:16).
"Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock before or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:13).
4. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).
5. "Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).
6. "Admonish one another" (Rom.15:14).
7. "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (I Cor. 12:25)
8. "By love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).
9. "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2)
10. "Forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2).