

# Doing Theology Part 1: Dr. Carl Ellis

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Dr. Carl Ellis

[ 0 : 00 ] Okay. We're talking about doing theology this morning, right? Is that right? Okay, doing theology.

Notice when I say doing theology, what am I assuming about theology? Is it a noun or a verb? It's a verb, right, right. It's also a noun, by the way, so you weren't wrong if you thought that.

But most of us think of it as a noun, so it's something that we study, okay? You know, so-and-so went to seminary to study theology, all right?

And I'm going to say that, no, it's not just a noun. It is a verb. And, okay, some of y'all know the answer to this, and if you do, it's okay.

If you know it, wait for a couple of people to try and then answer, okay? So, what is theology? Someone give me a definition. What is theology?

[ 1 : 04 ] Oh, y'all know it. Okay. Well, let's say it together. Theology is? That's what I thought. Well, it is that. That's true.

But it's more than that, okay? And if you know me, whatever you read of mine or whatever, just know that I'm coming from the perspective of theology is the application of God's word by persons in every area of life.

That includes the study of God. You got it? Okay. So, everybody in the West tends to define it that way, the study of God, because in the Western world, our theology tends to have a particular orientation.

It's not a wrong orientation. It just has a particular orientation. So, when I finish talking to you, you'll understand what I'm talking about. All right. Now, let's look at that.

The application of God's word by persons in every area of life. So, in a very real sense, you know, God, when he gave us the Bible, right? He gave us his word, right?

[ 2 : 18 ] He applied it to a particular situation, didn't he? To Adam and woman, you know, after they fell in the garden. He says, I'm going to send, he told them, I'm going to send Jesus. Did he say that?

No. He said, I'm going to send the seed of the woman, right? That's because they were concerned. They were wondering if they were going to have kids now, now that they had fallen, and now that they were disqualified to be parents, you know, I'm going to send the seed of the woman who's going to get you out of this mess and get this mess out of you, right?

Right? And he will stomp the snake and crush his head while he will be injured in the process, right? So, Jesus, I mean, you know, God then gives Adam and Eve the gospel, contextualized and applied to their situation.

You got it? All right. They wouldn't have known who Jesus is. You know what I'm saying? I mean, they knew he was going to be somebody, but they didn't know his name would be Jesus and be born in Bethlehem and all the rest of that.

Right? So, in a very real sense, then, when God gives us his revelation, he applies it. In other words, God is the first one who did theology. All right? He speaks to Moses through the burning bush.

[ 3 : 35 ] And he doesn't speak Swahili, right? He speaks Midian, whatever that was. So, there it is. Now, another thing about theology is that all theology is culturally and historically determined.

Okay? It's all culturally and historically determined. In other words, when we do theology, it's in a particular cultural historical context. Right? All right.

Now, how many of y'all believe in the five points of Calvinism? You got it? Right? Okay. Now, show me one passage in Calvin's writing when he talks about the five points. Calvin didn't come up with the five points of Calvinism.

Nowhere in his writings do you see that. But where did we get that from? Right? Well, we get that from the historical context where some people called Arminians came along. Not Arminians, but Arminians.

And they said that God is not sovereign, that we can lose our salvation, et cetera, et cetera. You got it? So, they came up with the five points of Arminianism.

[ 4 : 43 ] And that began to erode and attack the church. So, the theologians got together and said, okay, we got to come up with five points to counteract that. So, they came up with the five points of Calvinism to blunt that.

Right? Fundamentals of the faith. You know? What's fundamentals of faith? You know? The virgin birth, the inerrancy of scripture, the blood atonement, the, what?

The second coming? Those things. Right? We call those the fundamentals of the faith. So, if they're the, oh, and the inerrancy of the Bible.

Right? If the Bible is our source of understanding, if it is our ultimate authority, then where does the Bible list those things as the fundamentals?

It doesn't. Right? The Bible teaches all that. Don't get me wrong now. The Bible teaches that, but it doesn't list those fundamentals. Why? Because they were in a context where the church was being attacked on those five, on those five points.

[ 5 : 45 ] So, it said this is what it means. So, the Bible does have a list of fundamentals. You know? It has two, two lists. Anybody want to guess one or two of them?

There it is. Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And love your neighbor as you love yourself. And Jesus said, those are the fundamentals of the faith, didn't he? How did he say that?

On these two hang the whole law and the prophets. There you go. There you go. And there's another one. There's another list somewhere. I think New City, given our history, we should be more familiar with this one.

Can you give me the other one? Huh? Do justice, love mercy. That's it. That's it exactly. Micah 6.8. God has shown you, O man, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God. So, these, the fact that we come up with things like that, it's, we're within the biblical tradition, as it were.

[ 6 : 55 ] But we are facing historical, a particular situation. And Israel was facing a particular situation when God said that. So, he was applying, hello, applying his word to them in that particular context.

And so, that's what we must do. We must do theology. Or else people aren't going to understand what we're talking about. You know, I'm not going to, I'm not going to come talk to somebody and say, if you do this, you, your, your righteousness will be like the cedars of Lebanon.

I see that. But I've never seen the cedars of Lebanon. I don't know what they look like, you know. So, I'm going to come up with another way to say it. All right. So, when we talk about doing theology, then, history and context and culture say a lot.

Like I said, you know, our theology, remember this, our theology is not our Bible. Right. Always remember that. The Bible, I mean, you know, theology is not the Bible.

It is a derivative of the Bible, yes. But it is not the Bible itself. So, which means that the Bible must always be over our theology and must always critique our theology.

[ 8 : 13 ] See? Because it's, why? Why would I say that? We're in the Bible tells us that that should be the case. In 2 Timothy 3.16, remember? The, all scripture is God breathed, right?

And it is useful for reproof, correction, teaching, equipping, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So, the Bible itself, then, must have the highest priority and it must critique our theology.

And sometimes we do theology wrong. We do it wrong. You, you get, you get the history of the church, you see a lot of places where we, where we got it wrong. Okay? Okay.

All right. So, so here, here it is. Here's the, here's the situation. The Bible, then, being the word of God is our ultimate reference point.

I hope this thing works now. So, pray, doing, doing slides in, in this situation requires some prayer.

[ 9 : 19 ] Well, it's off-centered, but you get the point, right? All right. All right. So, so, so what is the scope of biblical truth? In other words, how much of life does the scripture address?

All of life. Okay. Let's imagine, then, that that whole screen is all of life. And so, so the Bible, then, addresses, believe me, there is a left part.

Use your imagination. Okay? So, the Bible addresses all of life. All of life. Everything. All right. Now, that's, okay, that's the Bible.

But how much, what is the scope of our theology? Does this, does our theology cover all of life like that? No. It only covers some of life.

All right? All right. Now, that went ahead of me there. Now, when we talk about theology, then, I like to think of it in two, you know, in a couple of different ways.

[10:24] There is what I call side alpha. Okay? Side alpha of theology. And as a matter of fact, when everybody said theology is the study of God, that's a side alpha definition.

You got it? Side alpha definition. All right. All right. Now, you're not going to be able to see all this, but take my word for it. Side alpha deals with the epistemological implications.

Epistemological. In other words, epistemology is what you know and how you know it. Right? Come on.

You've heard this before, right? Jesus loves me. This I know. Right? What's the epistemological basis for saying that? Before the Bible tells himself. Right. That's it. That's epistemology.

Okay? How do you know and how do you know that you know? Okay? Okay? And so there's that aspect. And I know that God loves me because the Bible tells himself.

[11:29] Right? That's one aspect of theology. And it's a good one. Notice it takes up, on my screen, it takes up about two-thirds of the window. But there's another side to theology that we often ignore.

And that is side beta. And it deals with the ethical implications of scripture. Okay? In other words, not so much what we should know about God, but how we should obey God.

You got it? But it's not enough to have either or. You got to have both. Okay? But sometimes we do theology, it weighs one way or the other.

Okay? Now, let's talk about Western theology. Now, you'll be pleased to know, since this is African American History Month, you'd be pleased to know that the church fathers, the great church fathers, Augustine, Cyprian, Athanasius, all those guys.

All right? They were Africans. Oh. And Augustine himself called himself the African, believe it or not.

[12:45] Okay? And these are the guys that laid the groundwork for the great Western tradition of theology. So we have our, the theology that we get today comes, you know, starts with the African fathers and comes up.

So if there, if there, if there wasn't an Augustine, there would not be a Calvin. Right? Okay. So thought I'd just let you know on that. But, but that theology is epistemological.

Why? Because in the early days of the church, the church was under attack from unbelieving philosophy and science. Okay? You got it? Neoplatonism and stuff like that.

Right? And they had to, they had to, they had to, you know, address that. Now, the Bible itself comes in very concrete language.

Very concrete language. But as these attacks came, they're coming out of this, they had to develop a language that was more technical. Right?

[13:52] To combat it. So that's why we have things like, you know, like we talk about the beatific vision. What is that? You know, does the Bible say beatific anywhere?

No. No. But in other words, the, the vision of Christ, you know, et cetera, et cetera. We, we, we come up with different kind of terminologies. Trinity is, is not, the word is not in the Bible.

But we know what we understand the Trinity to be. The Bible teaches that. Does that make sense?

It makes short, short, short hand as it, as it were. And so Western theology then tends to be more technical, precision, you know, you know, precision of language was very important.

And, and, and that's how the church was able to combat all the attacks that were coming from unbelieving philosophy and science. Praise God. Praise God. Okay. All right.

But the Bible comes to us in its raw state. It isn't like that. Right? Right. Uh, it's okay to apply it that way, but it is, didn't come to us in that state.

[15:04] Okay. Um, you don't like raw sugar, right? Raw sugar is not that white granular stuff that we have. It's, it's brown. It's sticky.

It's, you know what I'm saying? But it's been refined. It's still sugar, but it's just been refined. So, and that's a good way to, to, to look at it. Now there's the other side of theology, which is more ethically oriented.

In other words, as I said, how we should obey God. Now look at the Bible in the raw, look at the Bible in the raw. Think of all the judgments that God pronounced against sin in the Bible. Were the issues epistemological or were they ethical? Hello. Hello. It's ethical. You know, God didn't jump on the Philistines for having bad theological, uh, syllogisms and stuff. You put the A where the B should be. Now he didn't do that. He got, he, he, he brought down judgments because they were, they were wrong ethically. Now understand this, that theology, you know, many people think of theology as one thing and ethics as another. [16:17] That's a, that's a false dichotomy. There's theology. One coin. There's an epistemological side and an ethical side.

You got it? Two sides of the same coin. That's the better way to think of it because all theology answers ethical questions anyway. Right? So the Bible in its raw state, okay, is it mostly side alpha or side beta?

Huh? Beta. It's mostly a beta sided book. Okay? Now I thank God for the fact that we have the alpha stuff, right? But it is mostly a beta sided book because most of the people in the world are that way.

That's where they, that's where the orientation of most people are, you know? Now, so there's your Western theology. It grew in the, in the, uh, context of the attack, uh, from unbelieving philosophy and science.

Now, let's, uh, since we're talking about the American context, let's talk about the phenomenon of slavery. Okay? Um, so you got a bunch of people, you know, they get kidnapped, right?

[17:33] And they brought over here. And, uh, now they're slaves. They're suffering and all the rest of that. What is the, what are the primary themes in their lives, the slaves' lives?

Is it, is it whether or not, uh, um, uh, it's, you know, the, the second coming is going to, uh, come in a superlapsarian way or an infralapsarian way?

No, I don't think they were thinking about that. Were they wrestling with the ontological argument for the existence of God? You know? No, they weren't. They were dealing with suffering, right?

Okay. They were dealing with ethical sins that were against them, right? So as, and remember, theology is the application of God's word, right? So as the slaves began to do theology, hello, right? What kind of theology did it tend to be? Beta. Beta. Now remember, there's a big interface between those two. You got me? So, um, you've heard me say this before.

[18:36] Uh, as a matter of fact, we, we sing this song right here. You know, we take, sing a lot of songs out of the African-American tradition, right? I will trust in the Lord. You remember that? I will trust in the Lord. I will trust in the Lord with all my might, uh, or all my mind, whatever.

Till I die. Till I die. There it is. There it is. Now, what's the second verse? Do you remember? I'm going to treat everybody right. What's that?

An alpha approach or a beta approach? That's beta. Yeah. Now, if that song grew up in the context of the, of the dominant culture in this country, which is predominantly European, you know, so what would that second verse sound like?

I don't know, but I would guess I'm going to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Is that right? Is that right? So, okay.

So praise God. It's just a different orientation. And I would say that, that when you look at the civil rights movement now, okay, civil rights movement, uh, the civil rights movement was powered by beta theology.

[19:47] It was powered by beta theology and the, the, the, the evangelical slash reformed establishment in this country didn't see it because they were so focused on the alpha side, right?

They just didn't see it. But now one of these days, all of us are going to be in a pickle anyway, because we follow Jesus, right? And that beta stuff is going to come in real handy, right?

Okay. All right. So just remember that. But, um, so now you have two different theologies here, but they're, they're related. They're related. If you look at African American theology, you know that they strongly affirm the sovereignty of God, you know, and all the rest of it, all the things that reform theology takes, holds very dear.

Indigenous African American theology rests on those same foundations, but it applies in a different kind of a way. So, um, again, when I'm, I am not saying that we should do either or the other.

We should learn to do both and learn to do them seamlessly. All right. Let me give you another way of thinking about it. So, uh, okay, there you go.

[ 21 : 02 ] Uh, the alpha side, people in the dominant cultural situation tend to do more alpha side theology than beta side theology. And people in the subdominant group tend to do more beta side.

Why? Because they are faced with more ethical challenges, let's say. You know what I'm saying? Um, we're all sinners. And those of us who are parents, we understand this.

We love our kids, right? We love our kids. But there are times when we sin against our kids. That's a, that's an ethical problem. All right. And then, uh, I'll tell you the story.

I, I, I don't know if we've heard this before. If it, if it, if you heard it, just say stop. Okay. I was, uh, teaching a course at Westminster Seminary. Um, and, uh, what was it?

I forgot what the course was on. I think it was a course on the history, history and theology of the African American church. I think it was something like that. So I said, I kept talking about African American theology.

[ 22 : 00 ] And this one student says, he interrupted me. He says, he says, you shouldn't say that. There's no such thing as African American theology. I said, oh, really? He said, he's a, there's only theology proper.

That's it. There's only theology proper. You shouldn't ever say that. There's no, that's impossible to have a theology coming like that. I said, okay, well, you know, having studied there, I spent a lot of time in the library.

So I knew, I knew the books. So I said, I'll tell you what, um, uh, after we take a break, I'll address your concerns. He said, okay. So we took a break and went to the library and pulled out this book, which I knew was there.

And as we started the class up, I held it in front of the class. You know what the name of the book was? Scottish theology. I didn't hear anything more out of that guy, you know?

Okay. So, uh, so, so, uh, what are the things I think that, uh, that has been given to us in, in this context is, is this beta side, indigenous, it's an indigenous beta side theology.

[ 23 : 12 ] Of course, like I said, there's a lot of interface between the two. But people in the subdominant group tend to be more beta oriented. Why? Because if you understand how society works, in every system or society or whatever, the system of that society always delivers its best to the dominant group.

Always does. I don't care how you define it. You know, uh, people who are left-handed understand what I'm talking about. Try to use a pair of scissors. You gotta, it's difficult, isn't it?

You have to turn the, when you write something, you almost have to turn the page upside down, right? Because it's more natural to pull the pen than it is to push it, right? So, people who are left-handed are in the subdominant group.

They're more inconvenienced, okay? All right. So, uh, so the people in the subdominant group tend to see the, the bugs in the system.

Again, case in point. Book of Acts chapter six. They had a distribution system for the widows. Grecian widows and Hebraic widows, right?

[ 24 : 24 ] Greek widows and Hebrew widows. Now, who was the dominant group within the church in those days? The Hebrews. But guess what?

The system didn't work well for the Greeks, did it? It had a lot of bugs in it. Why? Because it was not geared to the subdominant group. So, that's why, that's one of the reasons why the subdominant group tend, they tend to be more on the beta side.

Now, let me give you a bigger picture on that. Anybody who keeps the covenant that God has given us is subdominant or a minority.

Hello. That's right. All of us. All of us. And, uh, we in the church have got to think of ourselves that way. We are a, a, a minority culture within the society.

It's hard to think that way sometimes in this country because Christianity from the very beginning had a privileged position. So, the mistake we make today is that we tend to think of ourselves as Christians as part of the establishment.

[ 25 : 32 ] But nothing could be further from the truth. Um, just wait a few years. You'll see what I'm talking about. You know, um, the, increasingly there is hostility, uh, toward Christians.

Um, if you, uh, if you look at what's happening today in, in these, in the, the, these radical ideologies today, they tell you that if you fall in, in, in all four of these categories, you are irredeemable.

All right. And the categories are male, white, heterosexual, or Christian. All of us are in at least two or three of those categories, right?

Okay. And so, uh, and so they're, they're, so it's, it's coming to that. You see, because what? The Bible teaches that. And we're coming, uh, under less and less favor.

We are not the establishment. We are the minorities. We ought to think of ourselves that way. For throughout all of biblical history, the people of God have most of the time been, uh, a minority or a subdominant group within the culture.

[ 26 : 51 ] Read the New Testament sometimes with that, with that, with that understanding. Uh, Karen calls it a, a, a, a persecution hermeneutic. You know, you, you read it as if pretend like you're under persecution.

Then you read the New Testament. It, it, it jumps out at you like crazy. All right. So the Bible itself then is mostly a beta-sided book, but it does have all the stuff that make the alpha.

Now, one other way of looking at it is, um, side A is more propositionally oriented. One, two, three. A under that. B under that. C under that. Four. You know, right? Right? Okay. And beta-sided theology is more narrative. And there are a title.

Tells a story. Um, in reform circles, I get around. Most of the preaching I hear in reform circles.

[ 27 : 53 ] And I say, when I say most, I'm saying 70 to 80% of preaching that I hear in reform circles comes out of the epistles. You ever wonder, you ever wonder about that?

Why? Because they're very propositional. You know, boom, boom, boom, boom. And there's nothing wrong with that. It's great. You know, hey, I preach out of the epistles too sometimes, you know. But I don't hear a whole lot of preaching out of the stories.

When I say the stories now, I'm not saying mythological stuff. I'm talking about this is really, really history. And we don't hear a whole lot of that. Because our orientation in the reform community is toward the alpha.

That's just as long as we understand that. I just got back from San Diego teaching a course on apologetics.

And every seminary I go to, I ask the question. I say, do you guys desire to graduate preachers who can preach like Jesus?

[ 29 : 00 ] They say, oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes. I say, are you sure about that? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, well, how did Jesus preach most of the time? He told stories.

Hello. Well, that's beta-sided. Right? I said, okay. So if you want to produce preachers who preach like Jesus, how many courses in this seminary curriculum are on the art of storytelling?

I found an exception to the no. And that was Westminster Seminary in Escondido, California. They are just now beginning to introduce a course called Preaching the Narrative, which is really great.

Now, don't get me wrong. I like that other stuff. You know, I like the epistle stuff, you know. But, you know, we got to learn how to be balanced. When I go, if I go to Alton Park or wherever, and I'm talking to some young men in the hood, they're going to relate to some stories that I can tell them. I tell them biblical stories. And I put them in the middle of the story. And all of a sudden, they begin to realize the Bible talks about me. But if I'm just dealing with concepts, they're not necessarily going to catch what I'm saying.

[ 30 : 18 ] Does that make sense? So, what we want to do then, what we want to learn how to do, first of all, recognize that there is a beta side that the Bible fully supports, and that we got to learn how to do not alpha or beta, but just theology.

We got to learn how to integrate them. We need to learn how to jump back and forth between one and the other. There were times when Jesus did speak in propositional terms.

That's when he was speaking to the religious leaders. My, my, my. Okay. So, there it is.

You know, so one of the things that we can be thankful for is an incredible theological tradition that has arisen in the context of this country that is more beta side.

Now, I'm not saying that the beta side theology is always, is perfect. No. You know. Because if you go into a situation and you got one or the other, you're going to fall into error.

[ 31 : 28 ] If you're alpha sided to the exclusion of the beta sided, you're going to end up having all these wonderful theological syllogisms and oppress people. Jonathan Edwards.

George Whitefield. They participated in the institution of slavery. You got it? How in the world could they do that? Because they were blind to the beta sided.

Okay. Well, you do alpha without beta. You end up with all kinds of weird stuff. You know. You end up with a theology that says when you, you know, when you, the first work of grace is when God saves you.

Okay. And he removes the guilt of sin. But there's a second work of grace that comes that nullifies your sinful nature.

Right? And having done that, now you could become perfect. All right. Now, the man who introduced that doctrine was a man named Charles Fox Parham.

[ 32 : 37 ] All right. And he is the, I guess, the father of, well, I'll just say. Anyway, he bought into that theology, that second work of grace business. So he claimed to have the second work of grace.

And he no longer, his old nature has been nullified. Having done that, the guy was a flaming racist. And a man, a man named William Seymour, who, who became the, the centerpiece of the Azusa Street Revival, tried to study under him.

And he wouldn't even let him sit in the classroom. He had to sit at the window or the door because he was such a hardcore segregationist. But his old nature has been obliterated. Hello.

You got it? And number two, you can't, you can't, you can't be perfect. So you, you, you, you come to that. Now, why did Wesley, that was a weakness of Wesleyan theology. It's because in his experience with God, he was saved.

[ 33 : 35 ] And then later on, he had this boom, this great epiphany moment. Oh, God is Lord. It was like a, like a, like a, a bolt out of the blue, you know.

And, and so what he did, he built this theology around his, his experience. There's a, there's a narrative there. See, and that, that's where we get off, off, off kilter.

The only thing I can say is that some of us experience salvation like that. We get saved and things are going pretty good. And all of a sudden, boom, we get this, this, this new thing, you know.

What's going on? It's like if you take off on a day like this, at the airport, it's gray, gray, climbing, 5,000 feet, 10,000 feet, gray, gray.

Also, you break out of the clouds, some, right? Sometimes people, but it's just, it's just the same climb. Some people take off on a clear day. It just goes around and kind of gradually gets that way.

[ 34 : 34 ] But that is personal experience. That's not biblical. So you can make all kind of errors when you have one without the other. So with that in mind, okay, I hope I've thrown enough stuff out there so I can get some questions.

But I would love to entertain some, some questions. Yes. What about the opposite?

All beta and no alpha? I just, I just described that when it's all on one side and not the other. That's what I'm talking about.

Now you think about all alpha and no beta? No, no, no. At first I described all alpha, but no beta.

That was when you can have these wonderful theological formulations and yet still enslave people. Which is, and then all beta, no alpha, you can have all this experiential stuff and make some major mistakes in terms of your understanding of, right, right, right, right, right.

[ 35 : 42 ] So it's not good to be out of balance. Yes. Yes. Yeah.

How do we approach it? Somebody's one side or the other. What we need to do, we need to be both sided. We need to be functional on both sides. That's all. So, you know, if somebody wants to talk about, you know, phenomenology or something like that, I jump on my alpha stuff, you know, and I deal with that.

But if someone wants to talk about whatever, what they went through when they were, went to jail or something like that, I'll jump on the other, the beta side. It just, it just, we need to be able to be that way.

If, okay, all right. All right. Some of y'all haven't been Presbyterian all your life, right? Before you became Presbyterian, what was your impression of Presbyterians? You got me?

Those of you who were Baptists or Methodists, what was your impression? You know, I know I had my impression. That's one of the reasons I didn't want to be a Presbyterian. But, I mean, God, you know, God has plans for us that may or may not agree with our plans.

[ 37 : 02 ] You know, why? Because the Presbyterianism is very heavily weighted on the alpha side. And praise God. Praise God for that. But, you know, you don't, let me go, let me go at it, go at it this way.

Alpha side is more conceptual than perceptual. The first question in the Westminster Catechism is, what is the chief end of man?

Right? That's a conceptual thing. And, of course, it's a beautiful answer to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Right? But, but if you go over to the Heidelberg Catechism, you know, that was written when they, these guys were under a lot of pressure.

Right? A lot of hostility. Right? Their first question, the first question is perceptual. What is your greatest comfort in life?

That I am not my own, that I belong to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, not a hair on my head would change without his permission, et cetera, et cetera. It's a very perceptual one. What is God to me?

[ 38 : 12 ] Right? And the other one is, what is God? No, what is a chief end of man, you know, standing outside of it, you know, so that's conceptual versus perceptual.

We have to learn how to, how to do both. One of the things, uh, one of the things I, I hear in, uh, in, in, in, uh, narrational preaching, good narrational preaching, is when, uh, the preacher would start off talking about, I don't know, some character in the Bible, uh, uh, Ruth maybe, Ruth.

And he starts telling the story of Ruth, rehashing the story of Ruth. And people are kind of responding, uh-huh, okay, God, yep, yep, amen, amen. And pretty soon somebody starts shouting. And you wonder what's going on. What happens is, you're hearing this story, and all of a sudden you realize that this is your story.

And my goodness, once that happens, it's, it's, you know, there goes the meeting, as they say, you know, right? Okay. Because it's a wonderful thing to know that my story is known by God.

[ 39 : 25 ] Okay. Uh, that's a, that's a great thing. I, you know, I've told you time after time after time. I've, I've shared with people and I've shared, well, think about this.

Let me tell you a story about so-and-so and so-and-so. And it's right out of the Bible. And suddenly they connect with it. And now they know that God knows their situation, that God knows who they are.

That's very, very powerful. And of course, it's very, very powerful when we're able to, to solve the problem between, uh, or explain, or give people understanding the difference between God's sovereignty and human freedom.

That's on the other side. That's good. That's a good thing. No. So, so anyway, that's, uh, one of the contributions. Now you go to, you go, you know, I'm in touch with Christians from many parts of the world.

And most Christians that I run into, I'll say, when I say that, I'm talking about 90% of them are, uh, beta sided. But that's where the world is, primarily.

[ 40 : 25 ] And so it's easy, very easy to, to preach from a beta side. You know, uh, last year I was in Kenya teaching from an alpha side, but, but the alpha was to explain the beta.

I was taking them through the whole Bible, you know, explaining what the covenant was. And they, they loved it. Yes. Yes. How do I tell the difference between speaking from one side or the other?

Oh, oh, okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, that's, that's beta without alpha. You know, there's no such thing as, you know, people don't have their own truth. There's no such thing as that. And see, today's ideology has taken up, taken up, taken some of that and, and has, uh, misrepresented it and, and, and abused it.

Okay. So people don't have their own truth. We know that. So there are some things that, uh, you know, like, okay, the, the side thing, um, well, that's where, that's where the alpha side comes.

I know that that's not right. You know, that's not right. You cannot, individuals cannot have their own truth. There's no such thing as that because if everybody has their own truth and there is no truth, right, right, right, this is a postmodern time.

[ 42 : 05 ] This is postmodern age, right? And one of the hallmarks of postmodernism is everybody's about narrative. You know, you hear it on the news, everything. Well, he disagrees with him because it doesn't fit his narrative.

Everybody's got a narrative. Everybody creates themselves by their own narratives. Okay? And that's where you get this idea of your truth and her truth. Remember when, uh, was it, uh, who was the Supreme Court Justice who was, uh, not Brown, the one before that.

Um, uh, Kavanaugh, Kavanaugh. Remember? He was up before the thing and this, this lady called Dr. Ford, she came and said he had, he had, uh, uh, assaulted her and all that.

It turns out they were never in the same town at the same time. How, how can that happen? But everybody said, but, but Dr. Ford has her own truth. Okay, yeah, but it's not right. You know, so, anyway, uh, that's, that's, so we live in a time when the whole idea of narrative is being poisoned, uh, by a lot of bad ideology.

Okay? But, there are times when it was poisoned by a lot of bad, you know, the alpha side was poisoned too, you know, so, uh, but we have to be scriptural. We're going to be under attack all the



Here's something, here's something. We always studied Jesus because we're so alpha oriented. We studied what Jesus said, what Jesus said. Okay. That's fine. Well, why don't we look at how Jesus did it?

Why don't we study Jesus methodology? That's, that's a part of, part of what, what he was doing. And so we have to then do the same thing. Um, we, we, everybody's in the image of God, whether they believe it or not, but we deal with them on that basis, you know?

And, uh, another thing too is that, uh, I found it very helpful that when I'm talking to somebody, they're troubled about something. I'm willing to get into that and affirm what they see in the right way.

[ 49 : 06 ] If they happen to see something right, I affirm that. They have something, see something that is, uh, wrong. Then I show them that if, if based on what they affirm by saying this, they are contradicting what they, what they really believe.

you know, it's that kind of a thing. It's, it's really, uh, really interesting. You start off talking about anything, but everything relates to God one way or the other. And that's the thing we need to learn how to do. Uh, we need to learn how to have the wisdom of Solomon.

Solomon was able to show you the wisdom of God in an ant crawling on the ground. You know what I'm saying? Those are the things. Cause the ant crawling on the ground says something about God, you know?

And, uh, and so, uh, and finally, before I get to here, uh, is it Haggai, Haggai two, seven? Um, it says that, that, uh, we look forward to the day.

Well, actually it is today that the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. the problem is, it's not that it's not there. It's problems. We don't see it.

[ 50 : 13 ] And so what our job then is to help people open their eyes to that. And, uh, you know, I hope that that clears it up. Shouldn't all of side beta be informed by side alpha?

Absolutely. And if not, what informs side beta? Cause I just, I'm confused why there's only, you know, an overlap in the middle and why it's not. Yeah. Yeah. Side beta must be informed by side, side alpha and vice versa.

It's gotta be that way. Um, I say this in, I think this comes from my lecture notes. Um, how the, uh, people, uh, uh, propositions embedded in the scripture make the scripture much more accessible to people who are more cognitive than intuitive and vice versa.

The narratives embedded in the scripture make it more accessible to people who are more intuitive than cognitive. You got it? And so the two must work together. You cannot have one without the other.

And you, and you should not be out of balance either. It's okay to be oriented a particular way. And when I'm in, in, in an academic setting, of course, I'm mostly side alpha, but I do bring in the beta a lot, you know?

[ 51 : 31 ] So, um, so yeah, they should inform each other. Uh, is God one? Is he, is he many? Is he many?

Yes. He's one in terms of what he is. He's three in terms of who he is. God is both of those. And, and neither one of those is above the other.

They, they both fulfill each other. And that's kind of how we must do it. That's how we must be able to do theology. When we're able to do that, then, uh, it, it's, the sky's the limit in terms of, uh, how we can, uh, carry out the great commission.

Okay. Any, is it time? Two, three more minutes. A quickie. Speak it. No, no, no.

You don't have to. Come here. No. Um, I was just going to say to that question that in, in that space of common content, I feel like is the function of the church to be able to do something that only the church can do.

[ 52 : 39 ] If you have side alpha, anybody can be philosophical and arrive at universal truths because God's embedded them in the universe. Anybody can be side beta and be social.

That's how you get the social gospel, but it doesn't require any transformation. But when they're together, that's the work that only the church can do is to bring people and bring our, our neighbors a message that says, Jesus loves you.

He wants to transform you into what you were originally created to be. So when they're together, you actually get the complete sweep of Genesis to Revelation. And it informs who we are, what we do, why we are unique in society, why we are a different kind of culture from any other culture that

can deliver social programs, or who can, um, be philosophical.

Amen. Let's end. Well, we'll end on that. It's a, you know, uh, thank you.

Uh, Karen, since you, since you summed it up, would you pray for us? Heavenly father, thank you for this time together. Thank you for my husband, um, who you've gifted so uniquely Lord.

[ 53 : 59 ] And I thank you for, um, his tenacity to continue to wrestle through, um, how we are to be who you've called us to be God, who you're making us to be Lord.

Help us as we rediscover who we are as a people, who we are as a set apart community among all the cultures. And God, I pray that you would help us to carry well, um, not just the indictment that, that, uh, scripture brings against society, that they need you desperately and that they're separated from you, but also the invitation that we hold out, that the kingdom of God holds out to our neighbors.

God, help us to walk well on all facets of your scripture, all facets of your promises, all facets of who you are and all facets of who you're making us to be.

And we thank you in Jesus name. Amen. Go in peace. Amen. That's it.

Thank you.