



# Why Theology Matters

Spring 2015  
Dr. Ryan Lister

# Why Theology Matters

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- I. Introduction
- II. Our Problems with Theology
- III. A Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life
- IV. Putting it into Practice: Why a Theology for Life Matters
- I. Conclusion: A Call to a Theology for Life

# Why Theology Matters

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## i. Introduction

-Question-



# Beginning Point:

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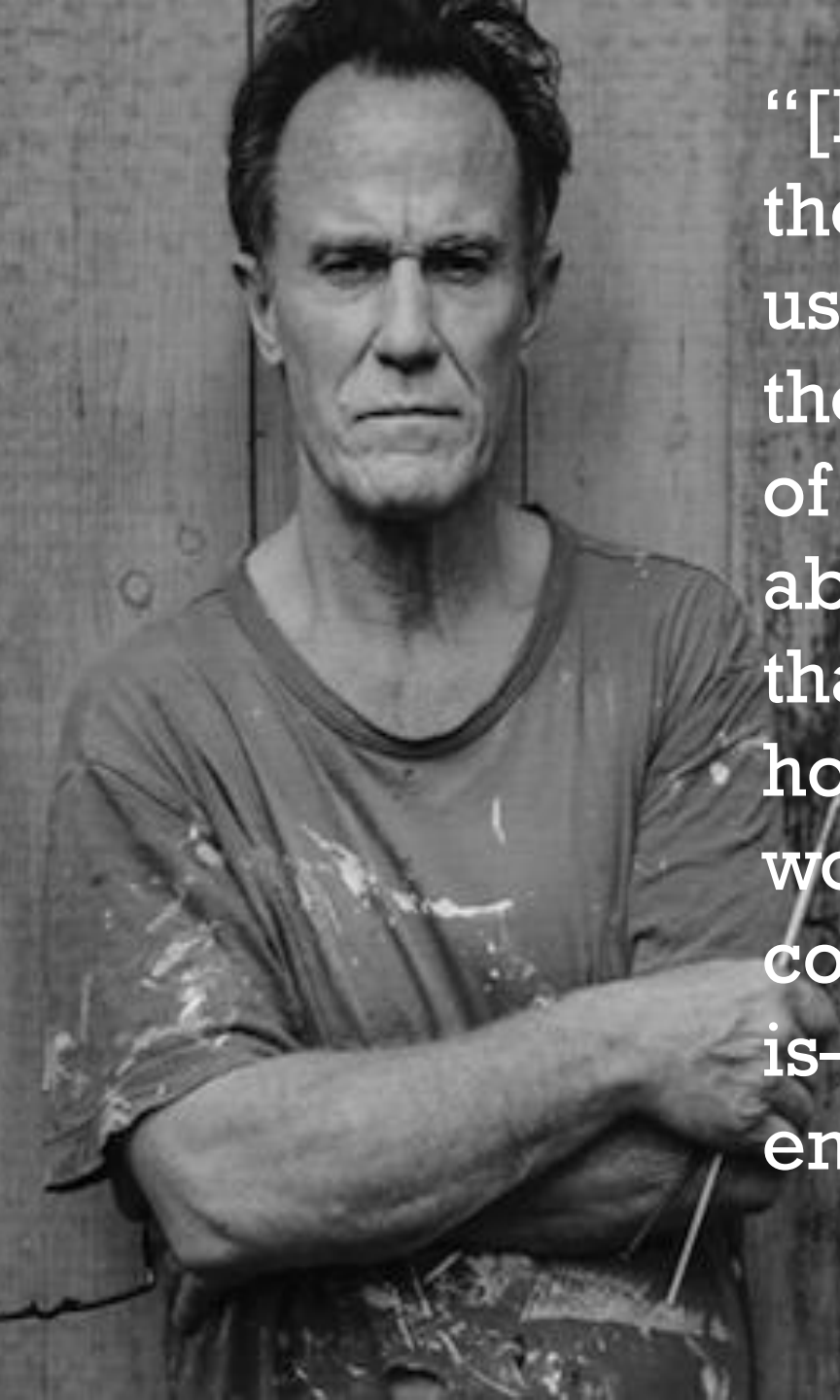
What comes to mind when you think about theology?

# Beginning Point:

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If you were texting a friend about your feelings on theology what emoji would you use?





“[I]f Jesus hates anything it is theology, as the word is usually understood. And to the extent that the experience of [my religious] community is about love and grace rather than false certainties I feel at home there—but then again I won’t live long enough to consider all the options, which is—perhaps—where faith enters in.”

—Frank Schaeffer, “If Jesus Hates Anything Maybe It’s Theology,” *Huffington Post*



# 4 Types of People Here Tonight

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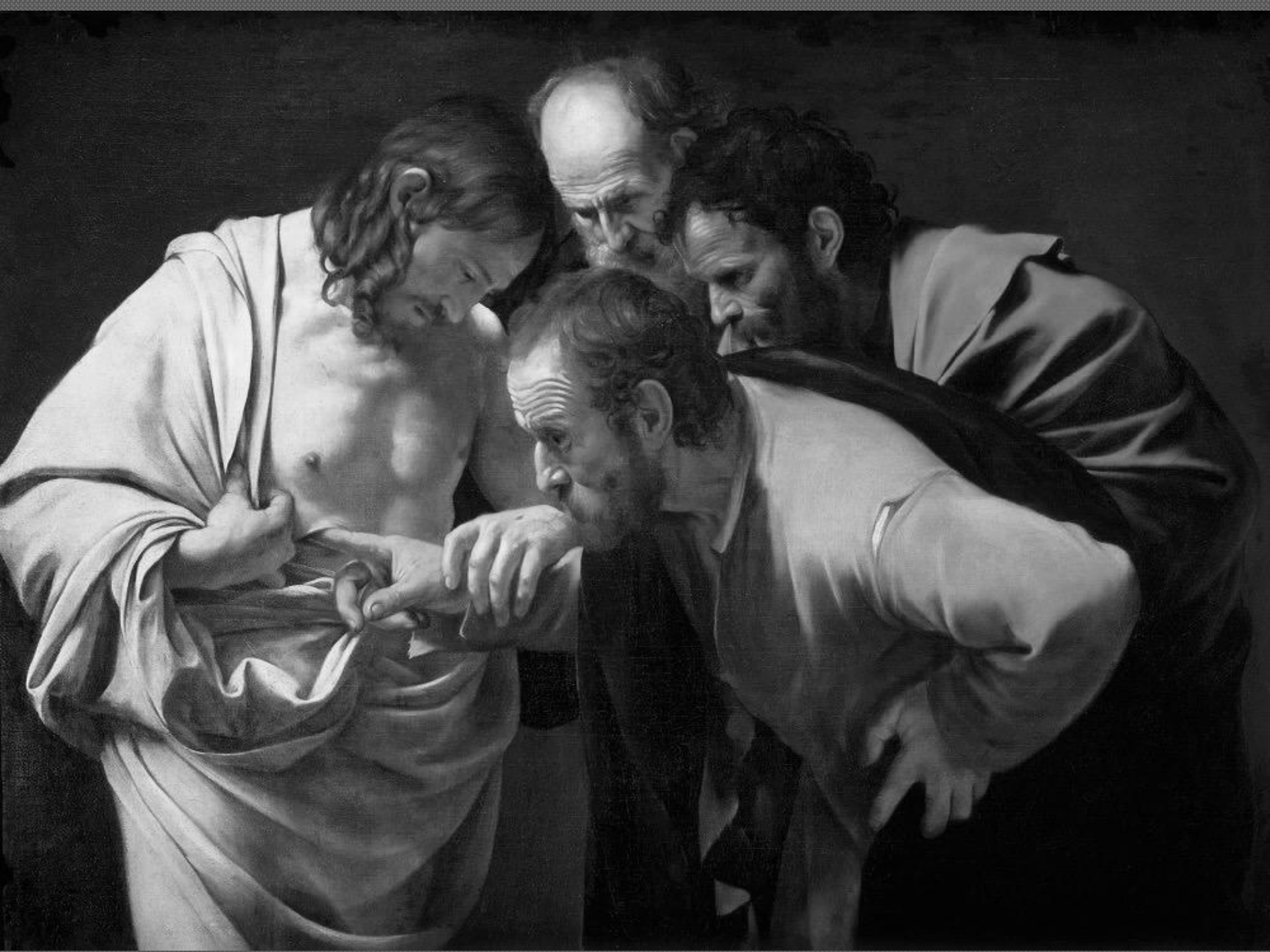
CHRIST WALKING ON THE WATER



# 4 Types of People Here Tonight

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- i. The Theologically Zealous



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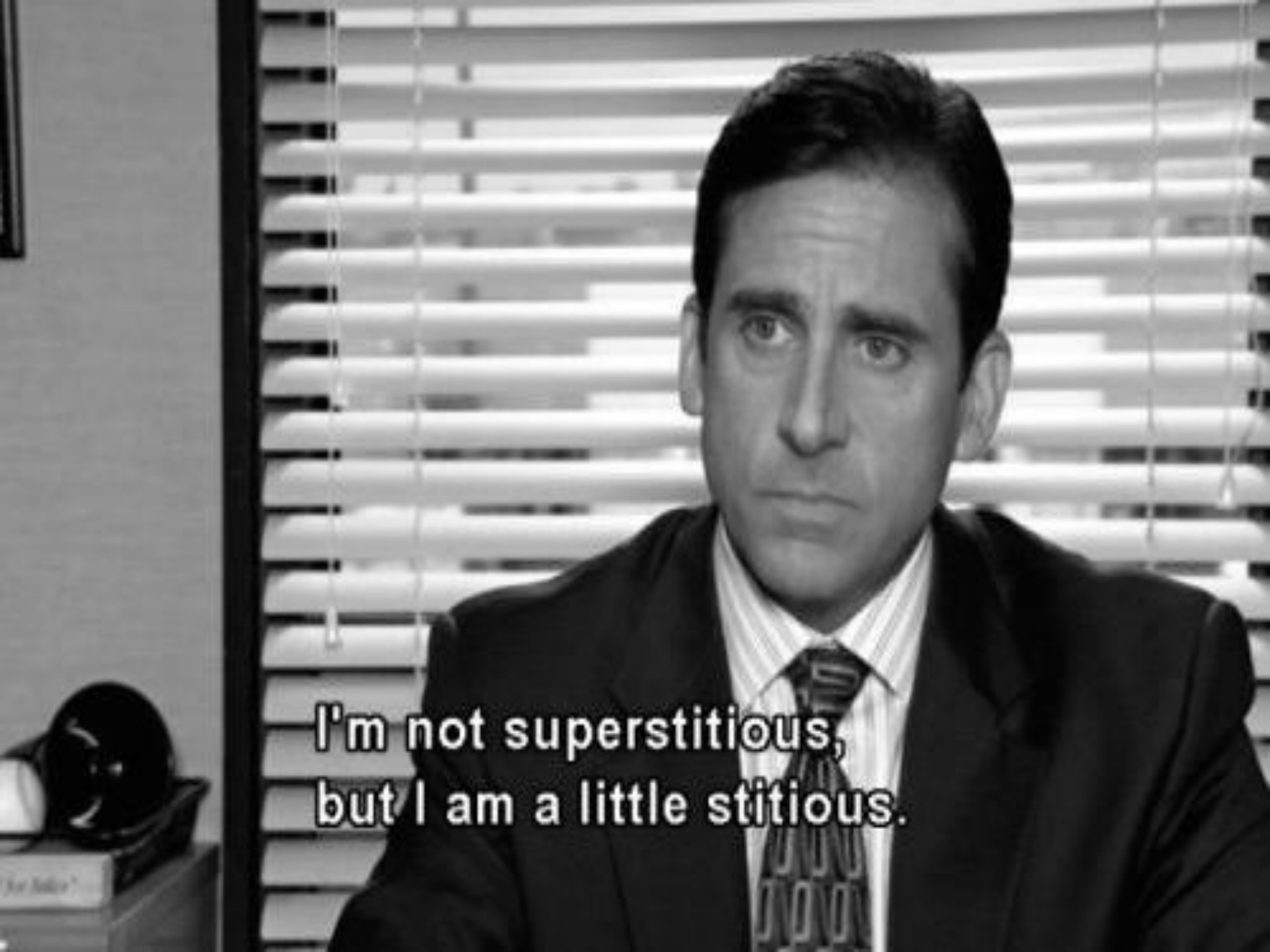
- i. The Theologically Zealous
- ii. The Theologically Skeptical



# 4 Types of People Here Tonight

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- i. The Theologically Zealous
- ii. The Theologically Skeptical
- iii. The Theologically Opposed

A black and white photograph of Michael Scott from the TV show 'The Office'. He is sitting in his office, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a light-colored striped shirt, and a patterned tie. Behind him are window blinds. To the left, a desk is partially visible with a baseball and a baseball cap on it.

I'm not superstitious,  
but I am a little stitious.



# 4 Types of People Here Tonight

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- i. The Theologically Zealous
- ii. The Theologically Skeptical
- iii. The Theologically Opposed
- iv. The Theologically Uninformed

# Why Theology Matters

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I. Introduction

II. Our Problems with Theology

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# II. Our Problems with Theology

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a. Six Main Problems with Theology:

# II. Our Problems with Theology

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- a. **Six Main Problems with Theology:**
  
- b. **Summary: What is Wrong with the Church Today?**

# a. 6 Main Problems with Theology

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5. Theology doesn't matter because theology is difficult and I am lazy.
6. Theology doesn't matter because the only creed I need is the Bible.

# Problem One:

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1. Claim:

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  - c. But think about what theology is in its simplest form: Words/knowledge about God—It is getting to know God better
  - d. What are we saying implicitly when we say that theology doesn't matter?: Its subject matter does not matter; that is, the words about/knowledge of God doesn't matter



**What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.**

**A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, 1.**

# Problem Two:

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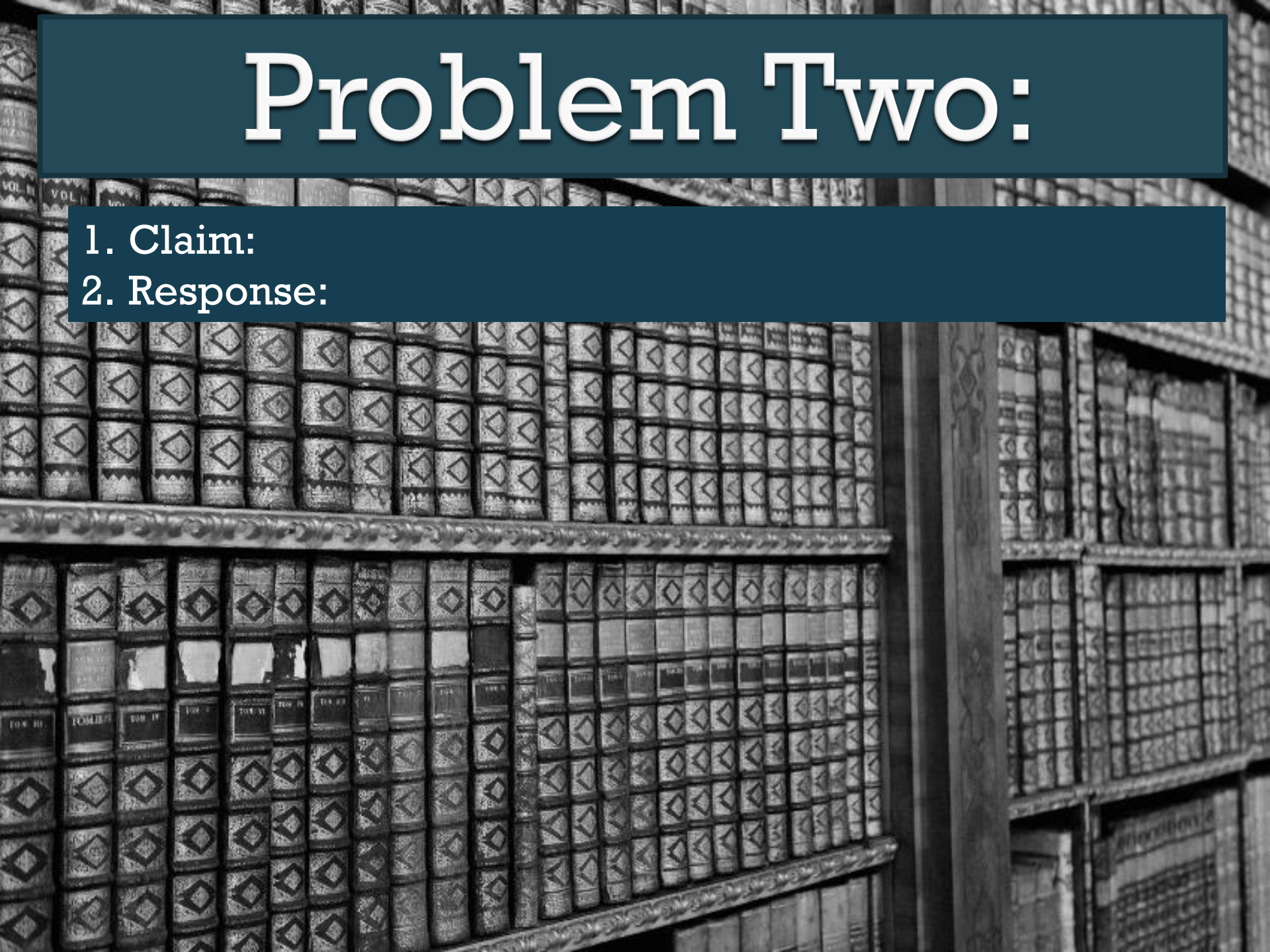


# Problem Two:

1. Claim: Theology is too intellectual for the average church member who is simply trying to get his/her family to church on time without doing something he/she really regrets later.

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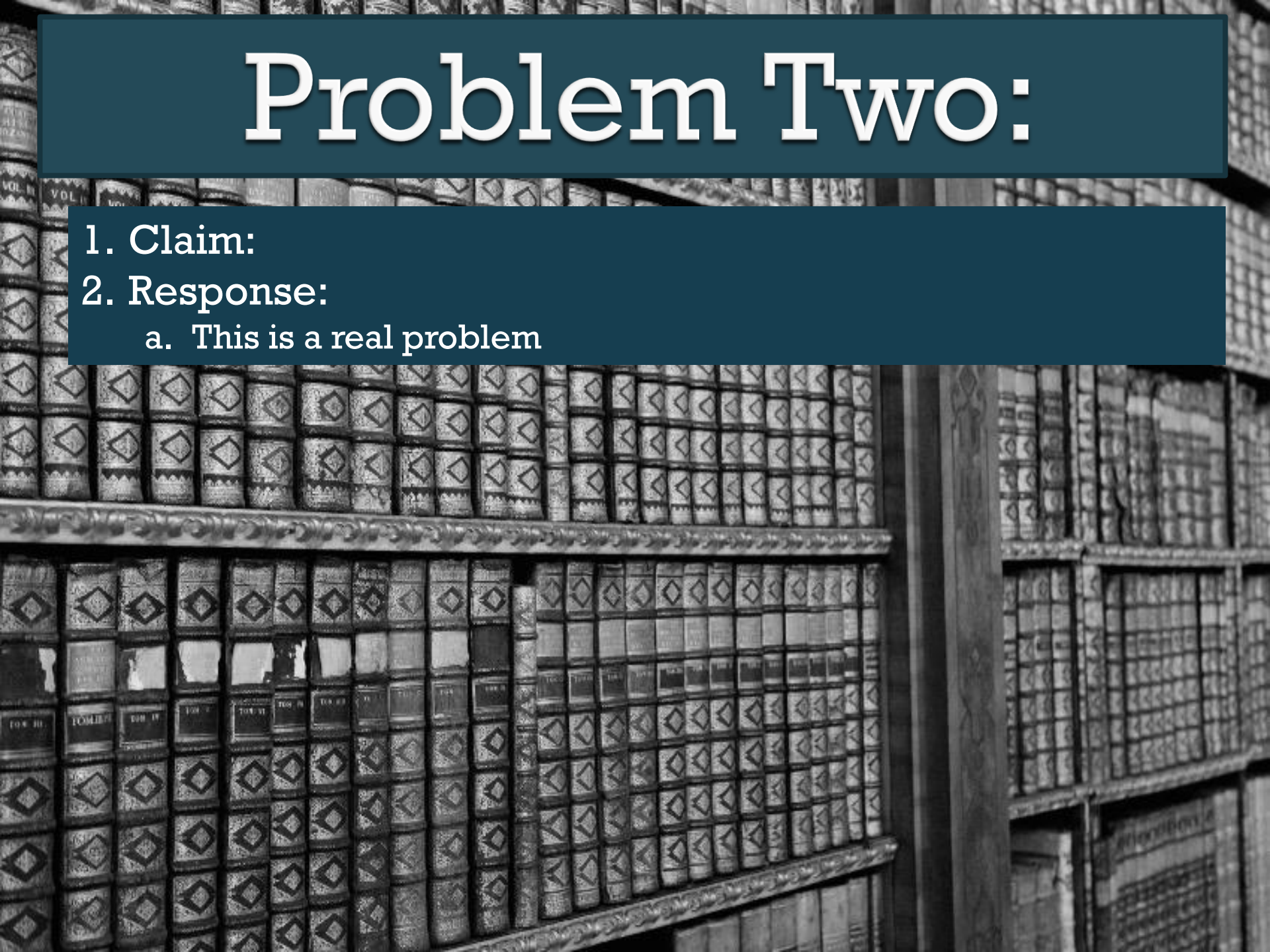
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- d. The church is a place for the mind

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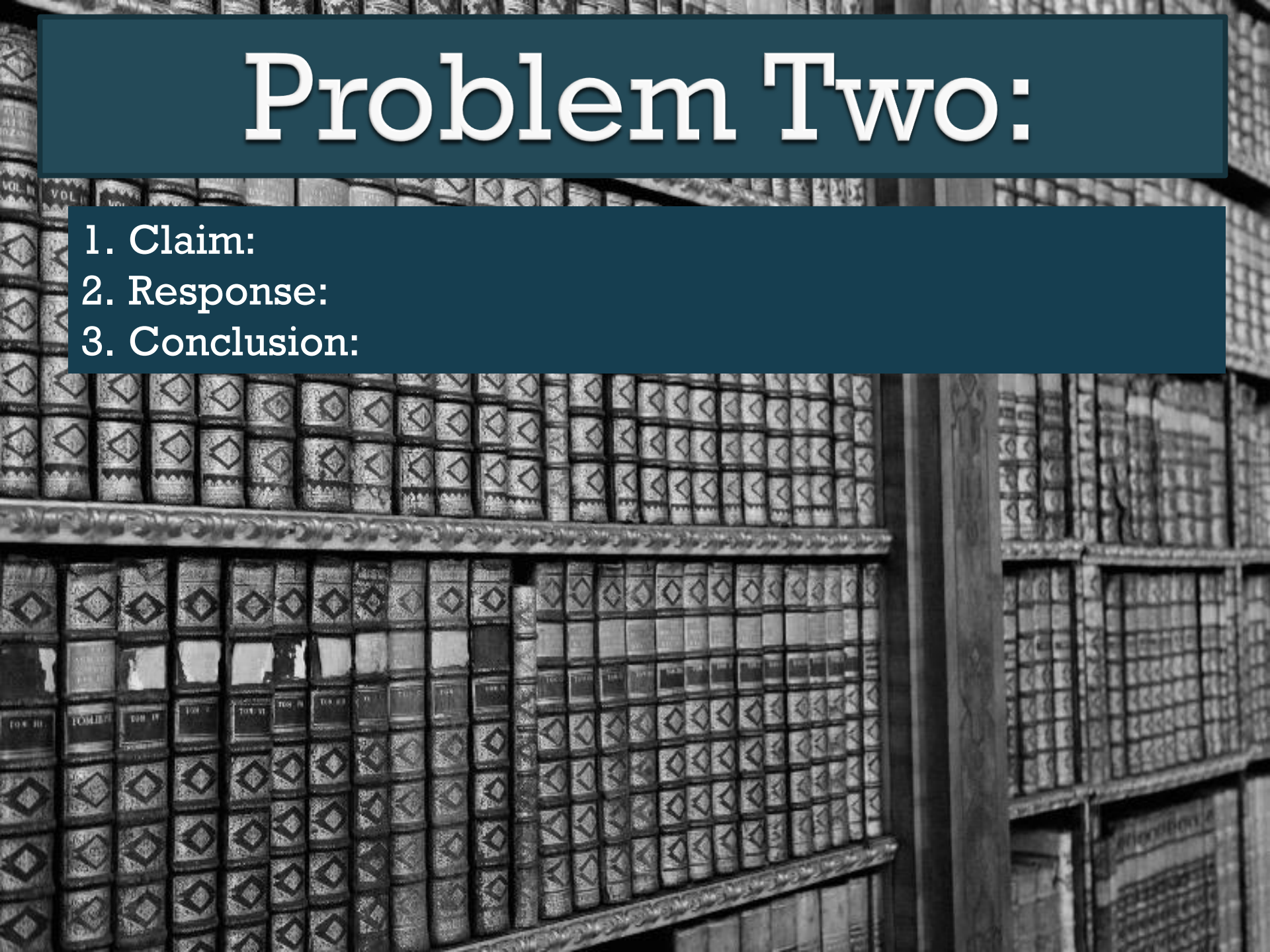
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- d. The church is a place for the mind
- e. Theology is extremely practical and necessary for answering the world's biggest, most practical question



# Problem Two:

1. Claim:
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a. Theology is not solely about reading books and parsing verbs, etc.—though these are important.

b. The parsing of verbs (reason we do this is because God's word is authoritative/verbal-plenary inspiration) and the reading of books) is for a greater end: the worship and enjoyment of God in love and faithfulness

# Problem Three:

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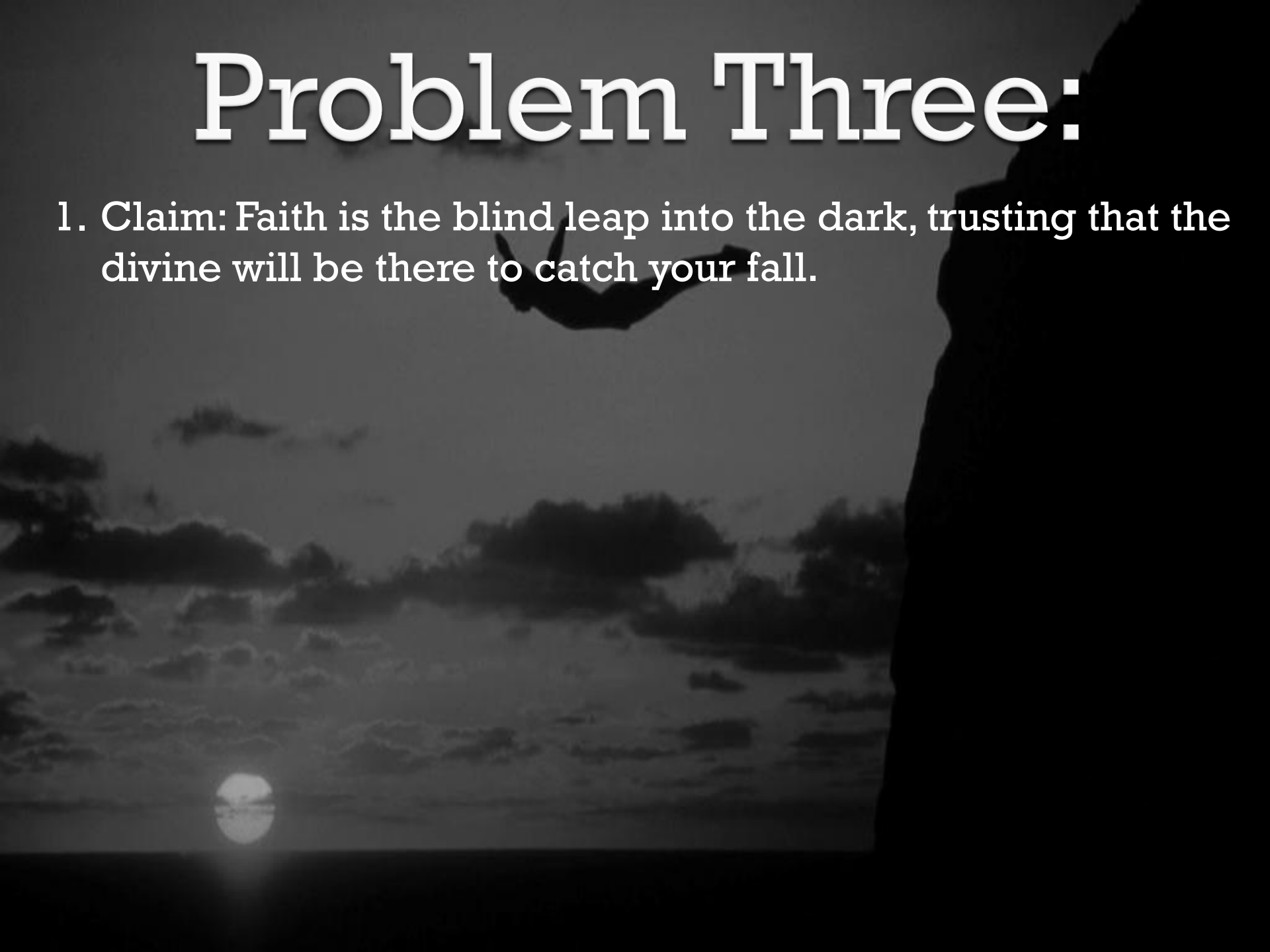
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Christian Spirituality “cannot be explained, and yet it is beautiful and true. It is something you feel, and it comes from the soul” (page 57). Later he writes, “At the end of the day, when I am lying in bed and I know the chances of any of our theology being exactly right are a million to one, I need to know that God has things figured out, that if my math is wrong we are still going to be okay. And wonder is that feeling we get when we let go of our silly answers, our mapped out rules that we want God to follow. I don’t think there is any better worship than wonder.”

---Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*



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  - c. My faith is experience-based spirituality, not fact-based theological analysis

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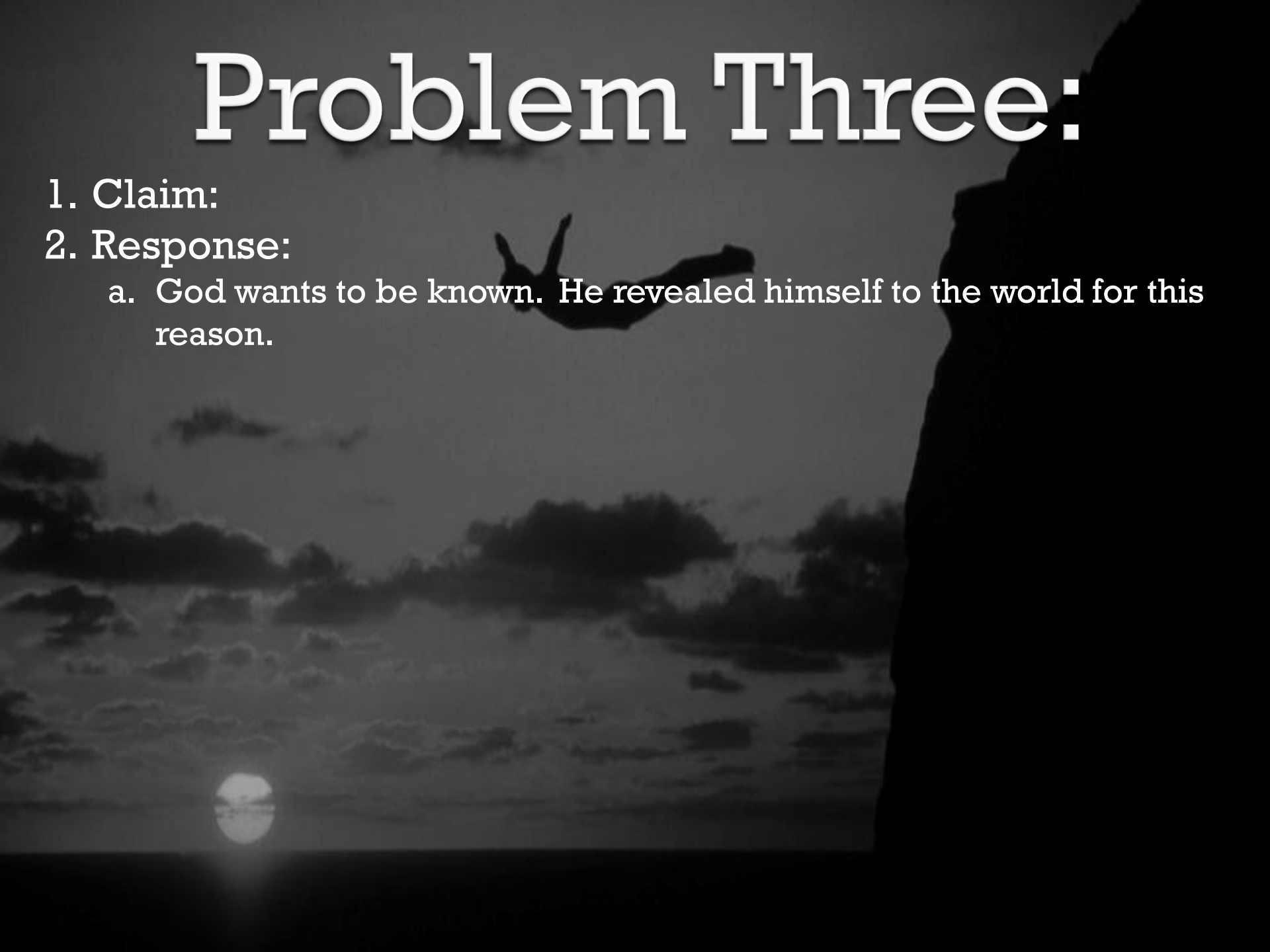


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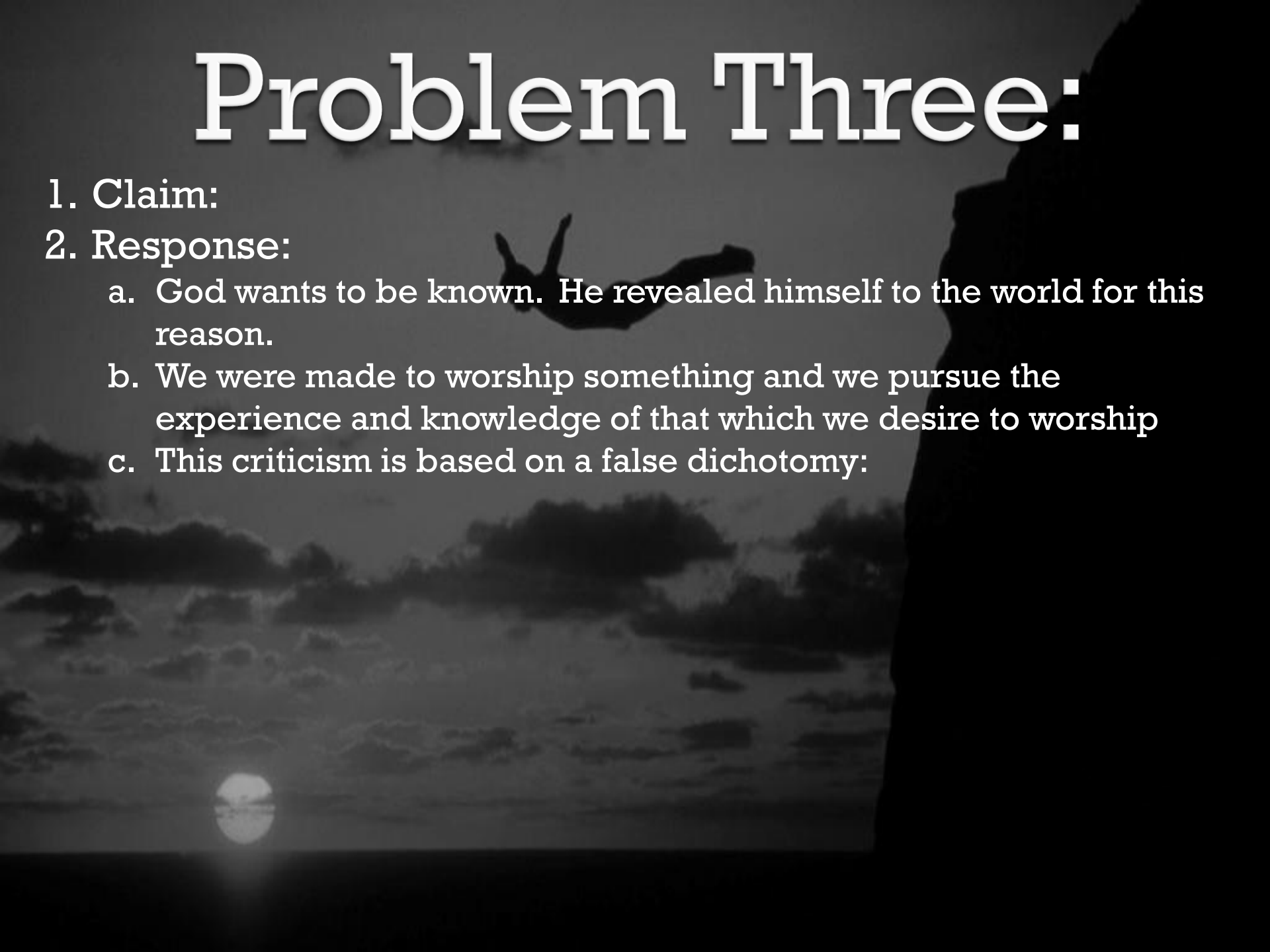
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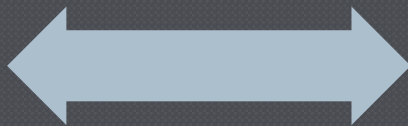
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- d. Thus, Reason and Experience are pieces in the same puzzle—ways to understand our world comprehensively

# Problem Four:

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Theology doesn't matter because theology is divisive and manipulative.



# Problem Four:

1. Claim: Theology produces war, genocide, denominational schisms, breaks up community, used to the leader's own purposes, etc.





# Problem Four:

1. Claim:

2. Response:

a. Where this position can be correct (broadly)





I don't think the church has ever been relevant to culture, to the human struggle, unless it believed in Jesus and the power of his gospel.  
—Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*

# Problem Four:

1. Claim:

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  - ii. Is there a place when division is good?



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  - iii. In the church and for the world, getting rid of theology typically does not remove the division—it escalates it.

# Problem Five:

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Theology doesn't matter because theology is difficult and I am lazy.



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1. **Claim:** Reading the Bible and studying who God is really is time consuming, boring, and binge watching Netflix is so much easier.



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  - a. Often times this is the main (unspoken) issue with theology: We are far too easily amused





“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

— C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*



# Problem Five:

1. **Claim:** Reading the Bible and studying who God is really is time consuming, boring, and binge watching Netflix is so much easier.
  - a. Often times this is the main (unspoken) issue with theology: We are far too easily amused
  - b. Not only do we not want to seek out the mysterious beauty of God, we find it boring now as well.



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  - iii. If God is boring to us one possible reason may be that we have not caught a real glimpse of who this God is

# Problem Six:

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  - a. Bible is the final authority over Christian faith and practice



# Problem Six:

1. Claim:

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- a. Naïve: Everyone reads the Bible theologically (1 Sam 15:11, 35; 1 Sam 15:29)



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- a. Naïve: Everyone reads the Bible theologically (1 Sam 15:11, 35; 1 Sam 15:29)
  - i. Saying that the Bible is our final authority is correct and yet a theological statement.
  - ii. All of us bring systems and presuppositions (basic beliefs or things that we hold as true prior to something) to our Bible reading. Theology helps sort these beliefs out.

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  - i. If all we need is the Bible then we can quickly become isolated and individualized
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  - iii. This is part of the reason God has instituted the church

# Problem Six:

1. Claim:

2. Response:

- a. Naïve: Everyone reads the Bible theologically (1 Sam 15:11, 35; 1 Sam 15:29)
- b. Theology keeps us from the Privatization of our Faith:
- c. We innately seek out counsel and direction when we read Scripture



# Problem Six:

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  - i. Why do we come to church to hear sermons? Why did you come to this session?

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- d. This is what Theology can do: Theology—or at least good theology—holds that Scripture is the final authority and builds its enterprise on and out of the word of God
  - i. Theology helps us read, know, understand, and hear the Bible in light of the *whole* Bible

# Problem Six:

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- e. The Need for Creeds:



I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth  
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried, He descended into hell;  
the third day He arose again from the dead;  
He ascended into Heaven, is seated at the right hand of God,  
the Father Almighty,  
from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

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- e. The Need for Creeds:
  - i. We all systematize, creedalize, theologize what the Bible says
    - a. Creeds and theology help you do this with your eyes wide open and do so in light of the authority of Scripture
    - b. Creeds are open, honest, assessable: Creeds are theology made public for the world to see and evaluate



“Christians are not divided between those who have creeds and confessions and those who do not; rather they are divided between those who have public creeds and confessions which are written down and exist as public documents, subject to public scrutiny, evaluation, and critique; and those who have private creeds and confessions which are often impoverished, unwritten, and thus not open to public scrutiny, not susceptible to evaluation and, crucially and ironically, not subject to testing the Scripture to see whether they are true or not.”

--Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative*

# Problem Six:

1. Claim:
2. Response:
3. Conclusion:

If the Bible is your creed then good! Do theology like the Bible does!

The Bible is filled with examples of theological work being done (Book of Acts is in a way built around the spoken theology of Peter and Paul)

# II. Our Problems with Theology

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- a. Six Main Problems with Theology:
  
- b. Summary: What is Wrong with the Theology Today?

## b. Summary: What is Wrong with Theology Today?

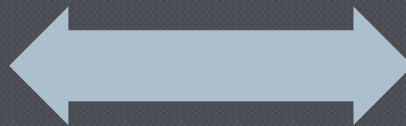
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Divine  
Perspective



Self  
Perspective

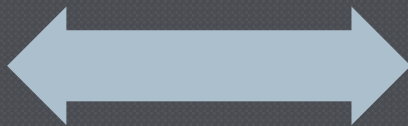


World  
Perspective

**Normative  
(Head)**

**Experiential  
(Heart)**

**Situational  
(Hand)**



## b. Summary: What is Wrong with Theology Today?

---

1. Head: Intellectual Critique

## b. Summary: What is Wrong with Theology Today?

---

1. Head: Intellectual Critique
2. Heart: Experiential Critique

## b. Summary: What is Wrong with Theology Today?

---

1. Head: Intellectual Critique
2. Heart: Experiential Critique
3. Hands: Application Critique

HEAD



HEART

HANDS

# Why Theology Matters

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I. Introduction

II. Our Problems with Theology

III. A Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

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a. Introduction: How do you plead?



# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

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a. Introduction: How do you plead?

i. Guilty: Yes

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

a. Introduction: How do you plead?

i. Guilty: Yes

1. We have misunderstood theology

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

## a. Introduction: How do you plead?

### i. Guilty: Yes

1. We have misunderstood theology
2. We have misunderstood the purpose of theology

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

## a. Introduction: How do you plead?

### i. Guilty: Yes

1. We have misunderstood theology
2. We have misunderstood the purpose of theology
3. We have not been good theologians

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

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1. Smokescreen: Most critiques arise because people don't want God to intrude in their lives

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2. We have misunderstood the purpose of theology
3. We have not been good theologians

### ii. Guilty: No

1. Smokescreen: Most critiques arise because people don't want God to intrude in their lives
2. Everyone is a theologian



Theology is practical: especially now . . . Everyone reads, everyone hears things discussed. Consequently, if you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones—bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas. For a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today are simply the ones which real Theologians tried centuries ago and rejected .”

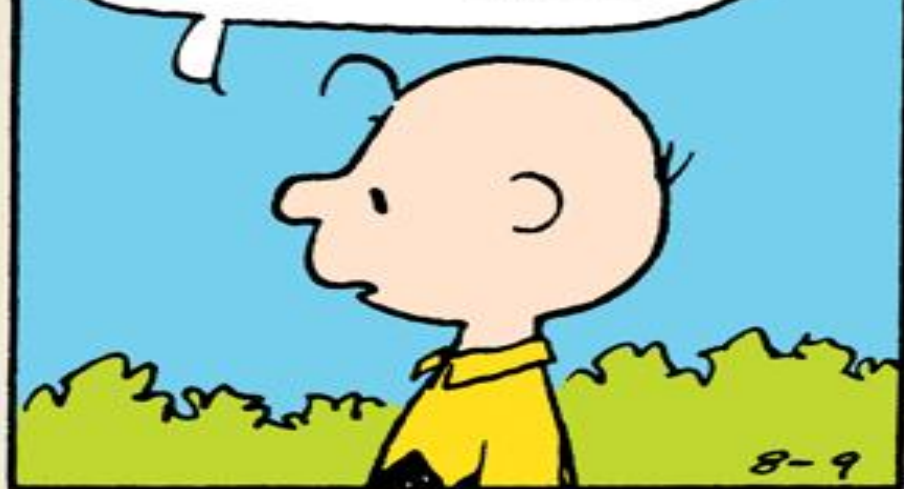
— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*



I HEAR YOU'RE WRITING A BOOK ON THEOLOGY



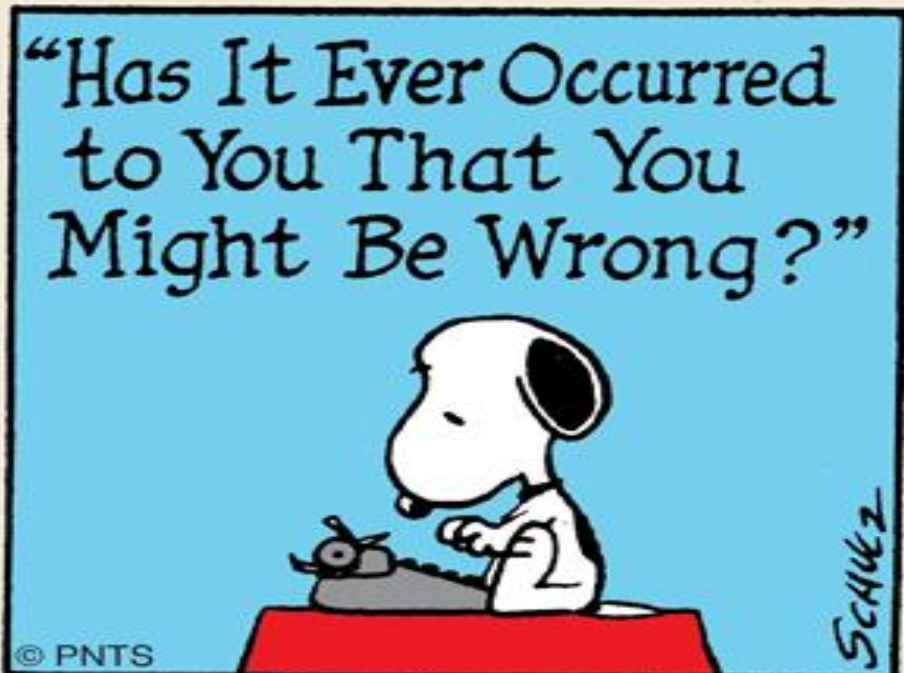
I HOPE YOU HAVE A GOOD TITLE



I HAVE THE PERFECT TITLE...



"Has It Ever Occurred to You That You Might Be Wrong?"



# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

## a. Introduction: How do you plead?

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1. We have misunderstood theology
2. We have misunderstood the purpose of theology
3. We have not been good theologians

### ii. Guilty: No

1. Smokescreen: Most critiques arise because people don't want God to intrude in their lives
2. Everyone is a theologian
3. The only way to fix this is not by avoiding theology, but by doing theology better

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

- a. Introduction: How do you plead?
- b. So where do we go from here?

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

a. Introduction: How do you plead?

b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

a. Introduction: How do you plead?

b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible

i. We need a Theology that connects the Head, Heart,  
and Hands

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

a. Introduction: How do you plead?

b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible

- i. We need a Theology that connects the Head, Heart, and Hands
- ii. We need a Theology that is Biblically Informed

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

- a. Introduction: How do you plead?
- b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible
- c. Theology According to the Bible

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

a. Introduction: How do you plead?

b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible

c. Theology According to the Bible

1. Let's watch the Bible do theology: Acts 17:16-34





# c. Theology According to the Bible



# c. Theology According to the Bible

## 1. Background:



# c. Theology According to the Bible

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### a. Stoic (Zeno; 265 BC):

- i. Pantheistic: God was viewed as all-pervasive, a world soul
- ii. History was cyclical and fatalistic
- iii. Humans are to pursue duty, resigning themselves to live in harmony with nature/reason.



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### b. Epicureans (Epicurus, 270 BC):

- i. Naturalistic in their thinking
- ii. No life after death, no judgment
- iii. Humans should pursue pleasure: the enjoyment of a life detached from pain, passion, and fear
- iv. Deity?: so remote as to take no interest in and have no influence on, human affairs (deistic)

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### c. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Readers: Portland and Vancouver

# c. Theology According to the Bible

1. Background
2. Theology—Part One: The Doctrine of God (24-30)



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  - a. God is the Creator of all (24)





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2. Theology—Part One: The Doctrine of God (24-30)
  - a. God is the Creator of all (24)
  - b. God is the Sustainer of all life (25)



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  - b. God is the Sustainer of all life (25)
  - c. God is the Sovereign Lord of the Nations
  - d. God is the One Who Has Made Himself Known (27-28)



# c. Theology According to the Bible

1. Background
2. Theology—Part One: The Doctrine of God (24-30)
3. Theology—Part Two: The Doctrine of Man (29-30)

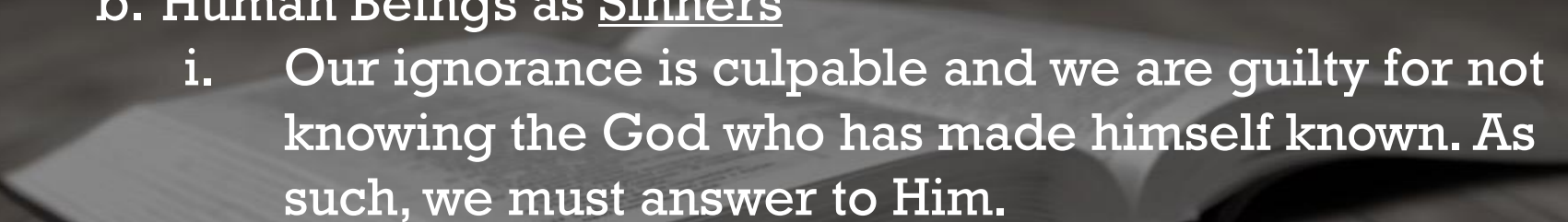


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  - a. Human Beings as Creatures
    - i. 26: From one man he has made every nation of men
    - ii. 28-29: We're his offspring grounds our uniqueness/responsibility



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    - a. Human Beings as Creatures
      - i. 26: From one man he has made every nation of men
      - ii. 28-29: We're his offspring grounds our uniqueness/responsibility
    - b. Human Beings as Sinners
      - i. Our ignorance is culpable and we are guilty for not knowing the God who has made himself known. As such, we must answer to Him.
- 

# c. Theology According to the Bible

1. Background
2. Theology—Part One: The Doctrine of God (24-30)
3. Theology—Part Two: The Doctrine of Man (29-30)
4. Theology—Part Three: The Person and Work of Christ (18; 30-31)



# c. Theology According to the Bible

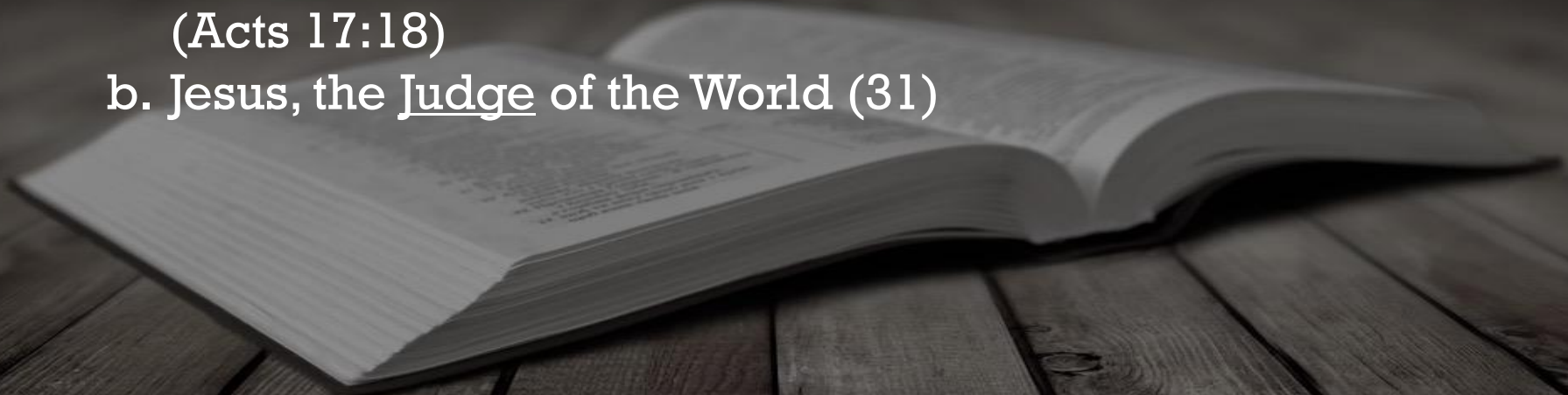
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  - a. Content of his Preaching: Jesus and the Resurrection (Acts 17:18)



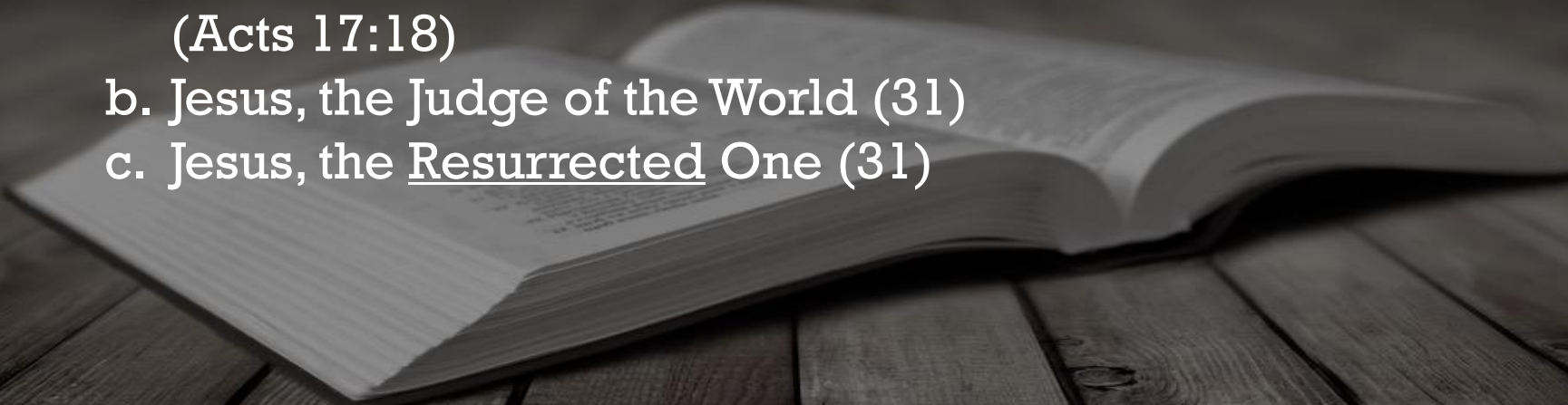


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  - b. Jesus, the Judge of the World (31)



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    - b. Jesus, the Judge of the World (31)
    - c. Jesus, the Resurrected One (31)
- 
- An open book with white pages and a dark cover is lying flat on a dark wooden surface. The book is slightly open, showing the text on the pages. The lighting is soft, creating a gentle shadow under the book.

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

- a. Introduction: How do you plead?
- b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible
- c. Theology According to the Bible
- d. What the Bible Teaches Us About Theology



# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

i. Paul Makes Them *Think*:



# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

## i. Paul Makes Them *Think*:

1. Part One—Analysis: Theology is about understanding all aspects of God's self-revelation
  - a. Theology is about thinking God's thoughts after him
  - b. Hermeneutics: Rightly interpreting the Bible

# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

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1. Part One—Analysis: Theology is about understanding all aspects of God's self-revelation

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2. Part Two—Synthesis: The storyline of Scripture

- a. Paul tells the story in an organized way—he takes the analysis (that he knows what Scripture says and offers it to the people as a whole)

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3. Conclusion:



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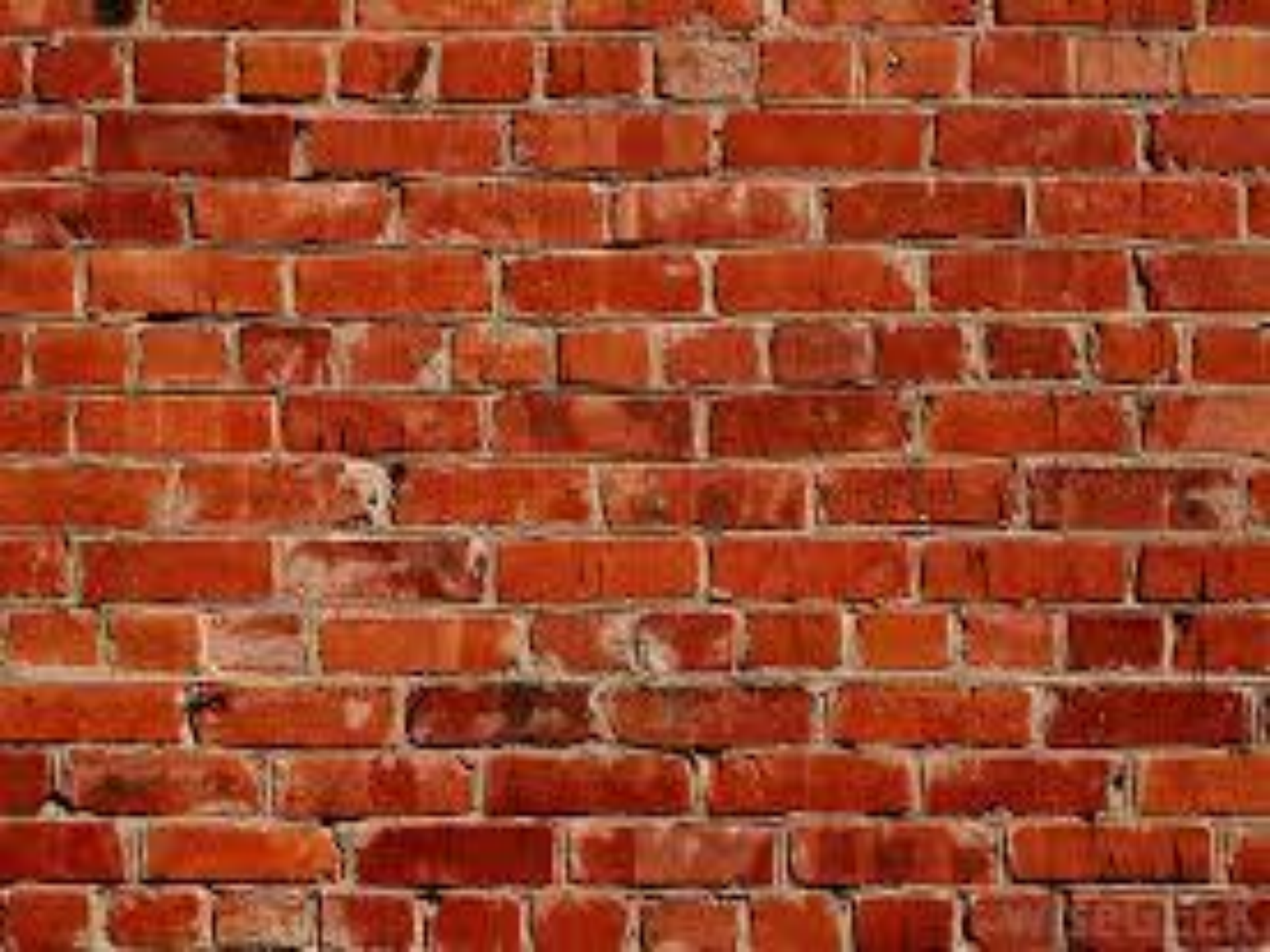
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2. Part Two—Synthesis: The storyline of Scripture
  - a. Paul tells the story in an organized way—he takes the analysis (that he knows what Scripture says and offers it to the people as a whole)
  
3. Conclusion:
  - a. We synthesize what we have analyzed and analyze what we have synthesized.
  - b. We understand the whole because we have grappled with the parts and put the parts together to make up the whole. (Brick Wall)





FENWAY PARK

1903

1904

1912

1915

# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

- i. Paul Makes Them *Think*
- ii. Paul Calls Them to Worship



# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

i. Paul Makes Them *Think*

ii. Paul Calls Them to *Worship*

1. Theology is for Doxology: Why is Paul doing this theology?

# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

i. Paul Makes Them *Think*

ii. Paul Calls Them to *Worship*

1. Theology is for Doxology: Why is Paul doing this theology?

a. If we really understand this then we must worship this  
God of grace



# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

i. Paul Makes Them *Think*

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b. Praise has to have content though—otherwise we are  
just noisy gongs

# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

i. Paul Makes Them *Think*

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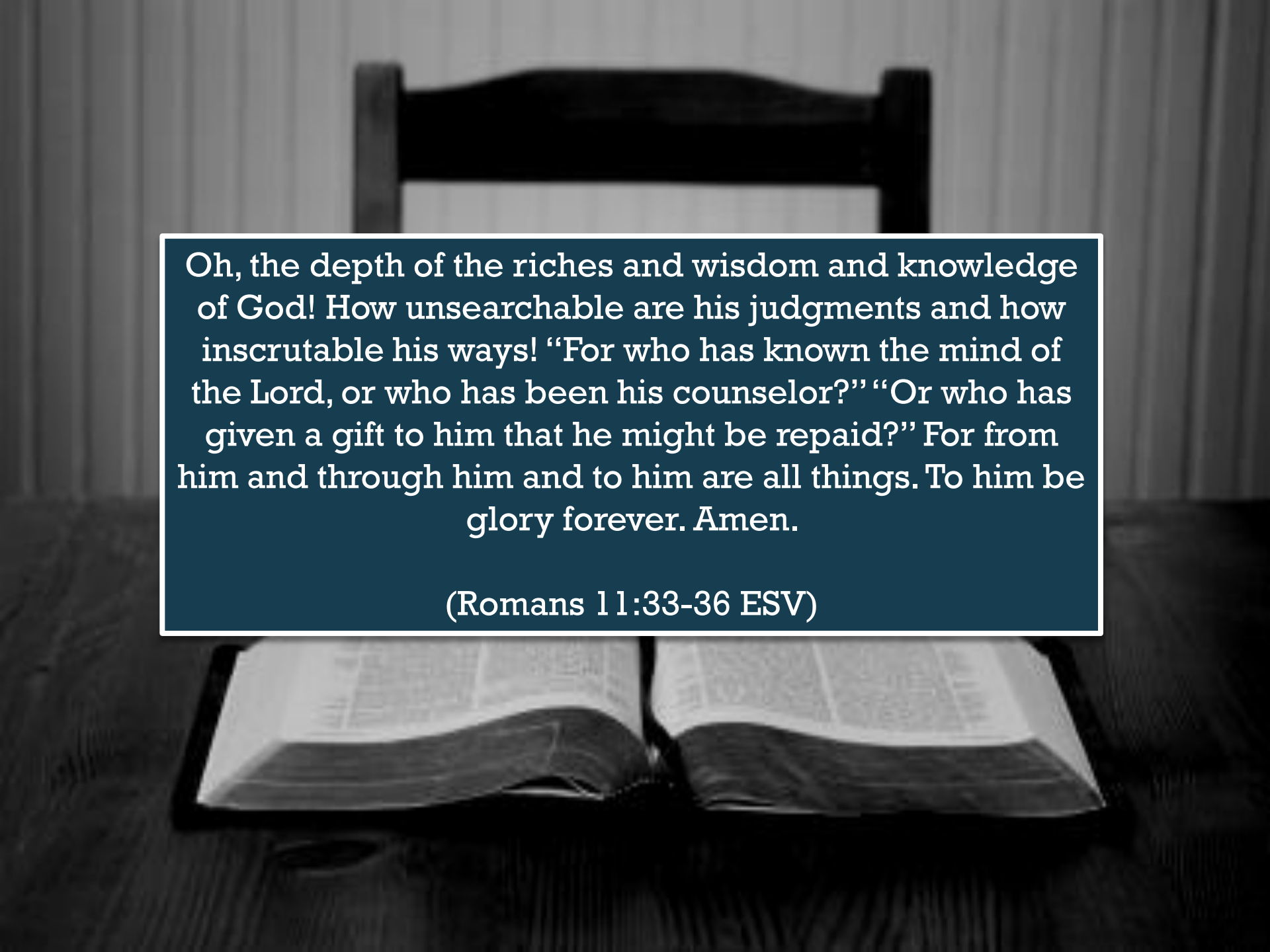
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c. Romans 11:33-36





Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

(Romans 11:33-36 ESV)

# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

i. Paul Makes Them *Think*

ii. Paul Calls Them to *Worship*

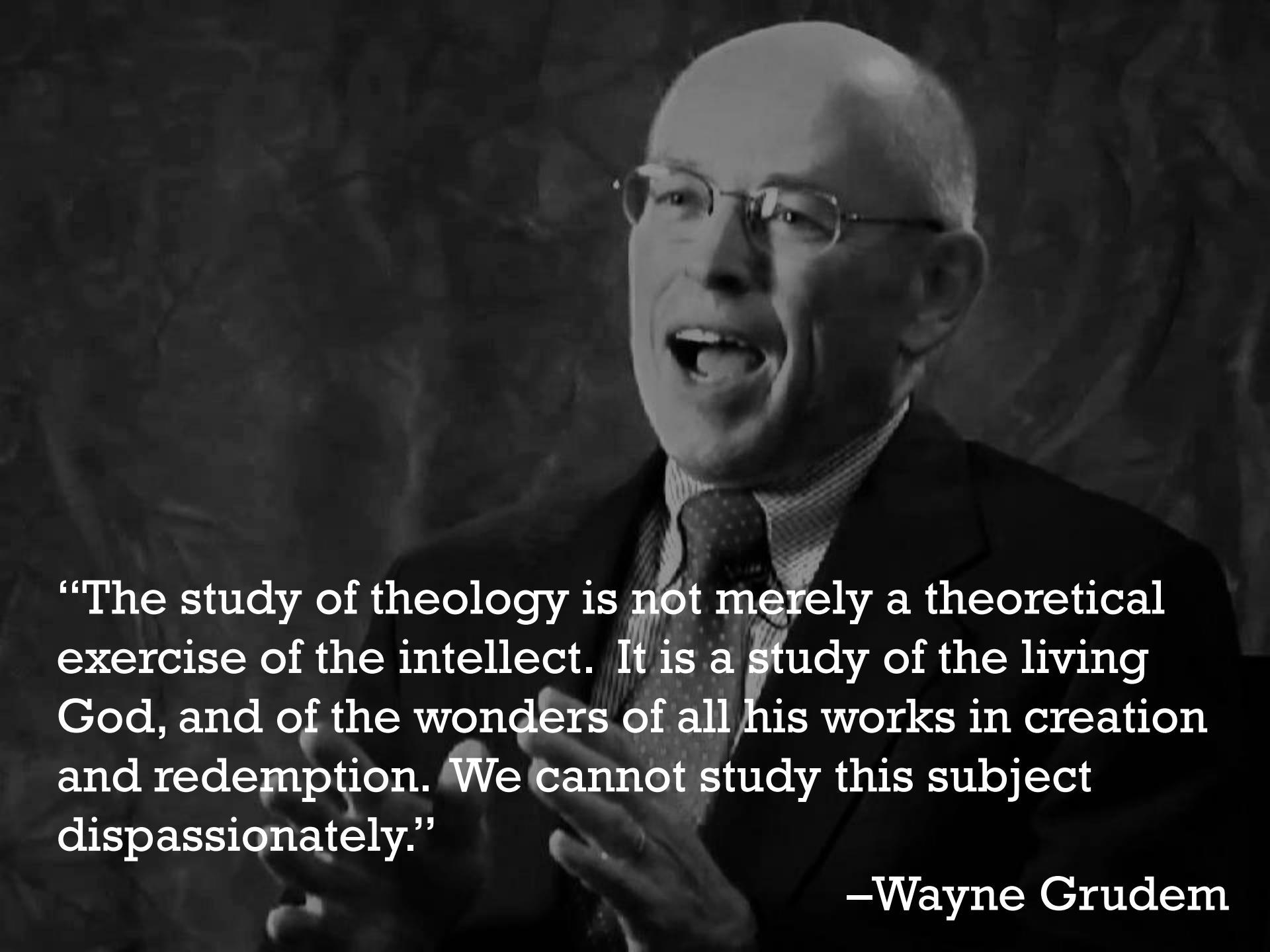
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just noisy gongs

c. Romans 11:33-36

d. Doctrine should always breed worship—Not pride and  
not disunity. It should drive us to our knees

A black and white photograph of Wayne Grudem, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a suit and tie. He is captured in a moment of speaking, with his mouth open and his hands gesturing. The background is dark and out of focus.

**“The study of theology is not merely a theoretical exercise of the intellect. It is a study of the living God, and of the wonders of all his works in creation and redemption. We cannot study this subject dispassionately.”**

**–Wayne Grudem**

# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

- i. Paul Makes Them *Think*
- ii. Paul Calls Them to *Worship*
- iii. Paul Speaks to His Context





# d. What the Bible Teach Us About Theology

i. Paul Makes Them *Think*

ii. Paul Calls Them to *Worship*

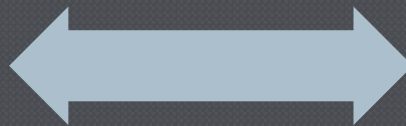
iii. Paul Speaks to His *Context*

1. Applies theology to his context for the purpose of redemption/change: Paul speaks to Athenian culture and situation in ways they understand and feel

**Normative  
(Head)**

**Experiential  
(Heart)**

**Situational  
(Hand)**



# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

- a. Introduction: How do you plead?
- b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible
- c. Theology According to the Bible
- d. What the Bible Teaches Us About Theology
- e. Our Proposal: A Theology for Life

# Our Definition:

Theology is a biblically informed understanding of God and his relationship with creation that we then apply to life in order to bring about true worship and real spiritual transformation.

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

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  - i. A Theology of Life works through the Spirit to:
    - 1. Communicate biblical content (Head)



# 1. Communicate Biblical Content (Head)

## a. Analytic and Synthetic

# 1. Communicate Biblical Content (Head)

a. **Analytic and Synthetic**

a. **Theology helps us know what we love—according to God's own self-revelation**

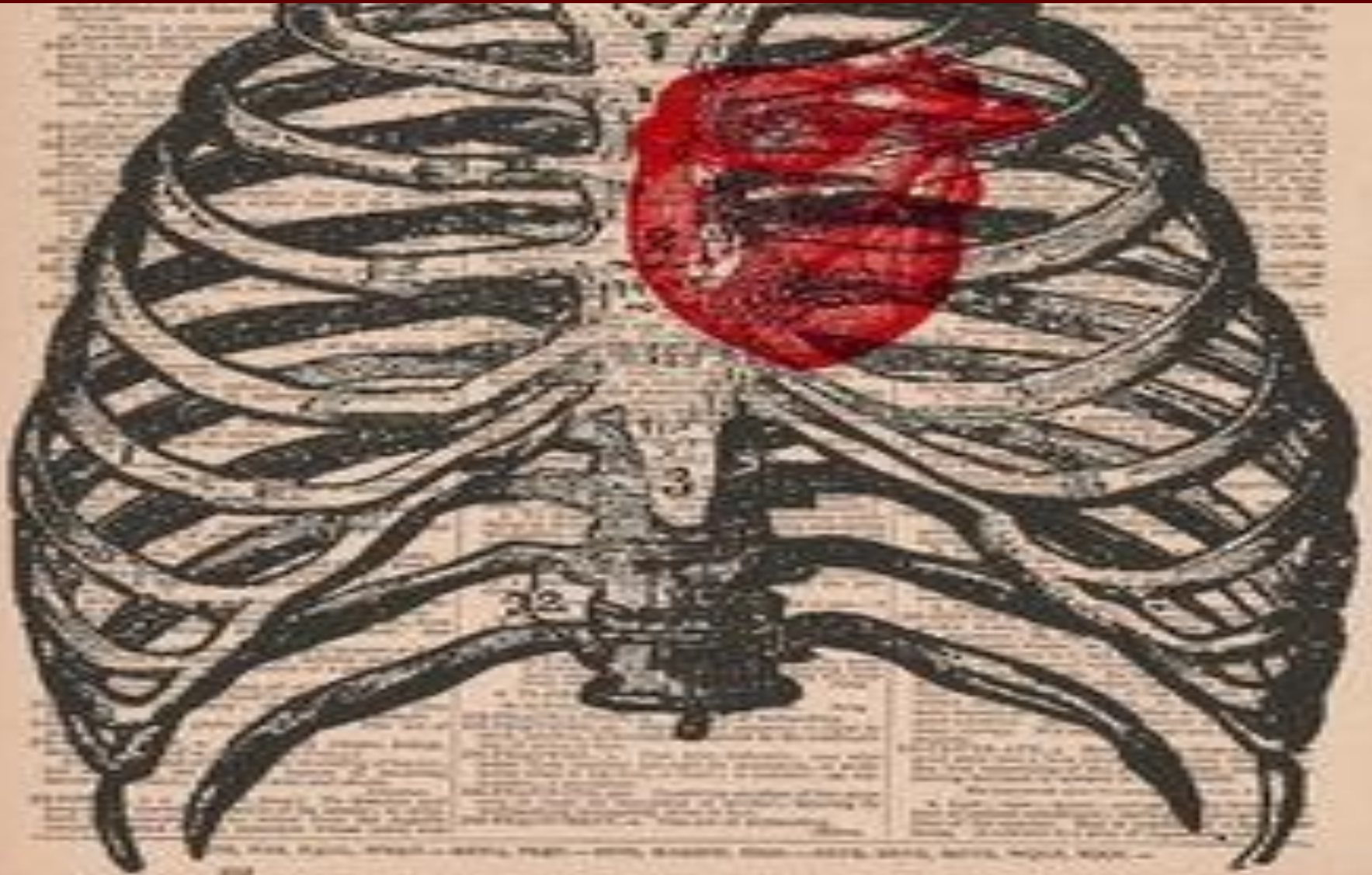


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  - i. A Theology of Life works through the Spirit to:
    - 1. Communicate biblical content (Head)
    - 2. Edify God's people and incite their hearts to worship through a proper understanding of the Scriptures (Heart)

## 2. Edify God's people & incite their hearts to worship



## 2. Edify God's people & incite their hearts to worship

- a. Theology provides the content that then prepares us to respond to the truth of God's word

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- b. Theology is more than providing information: The point of theology, like everything in the Christian life, is the worship of God

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- a. Theology provides the content that then prepares us to respond to the truth of God's word
- b. Theology is more than providing information: The point of theology, like everything in the Christian life, is the worship of God
- c. This is the Spirit's work: But we are responsible for being used by the Spirit in our theology (Eph 1:15-23; Acts 4:31)

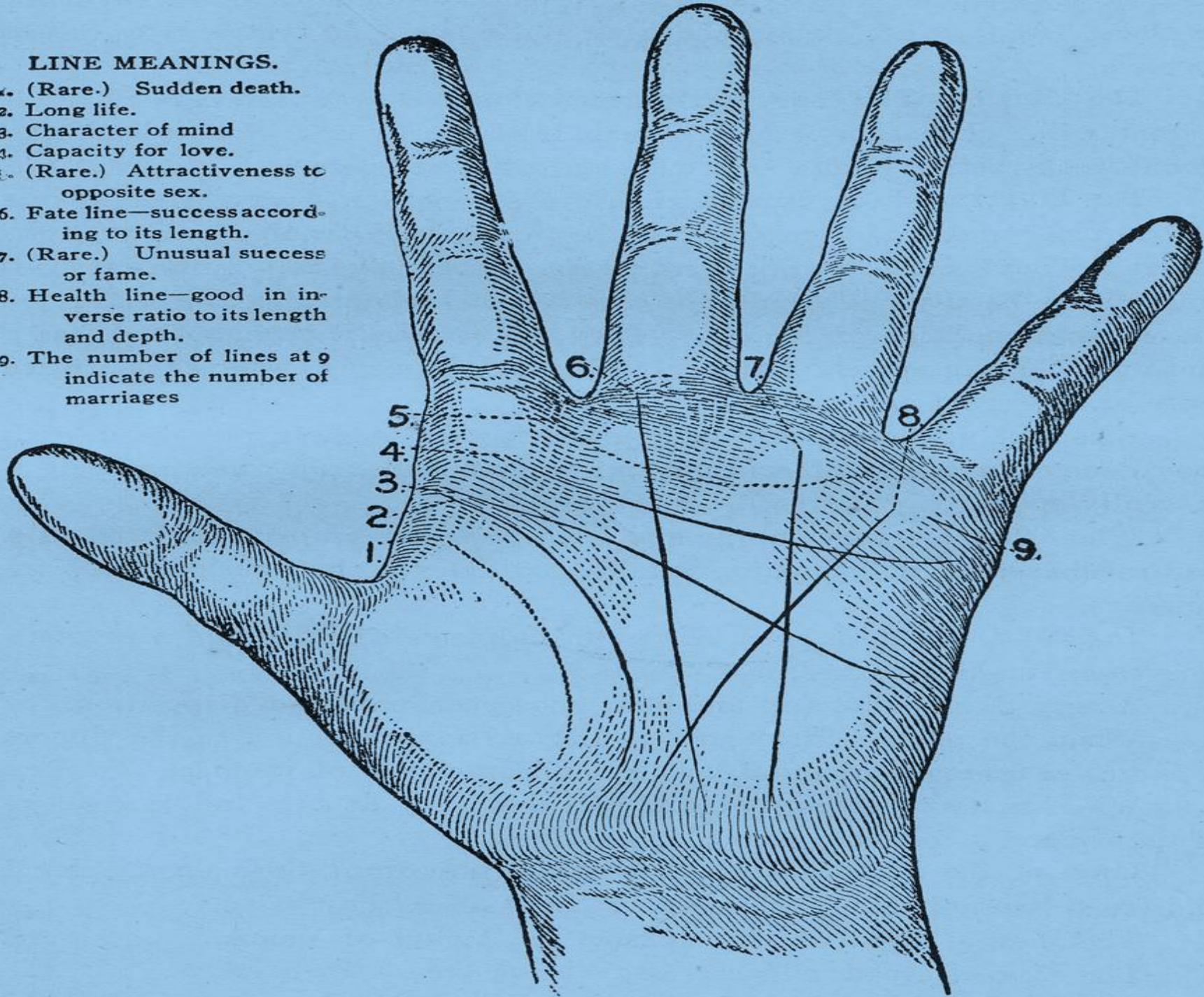
# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

- a. Introduction: How do you plead?
- b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible
- c. Theology According to the Bible
- d. What the Bible Teaches Us About Theology
- e. Our Proposal: A Theology for Life
  - i. A Theology of Life works through the Spirit to:
    - 1. Communicate biblical content (Head)
    - 2. Edify God's people and incite their hearts to worship through a proper understanding of the Scriptures (Heart)
    - 3. Applies Scripture's teaching to all aspects of life for true spiritual change and conformity to Christ (Hands)

### LINE MEANINGS.

1. (Rare.) Sudden death.
2. Long life.
3. Character of mind
4. Capacity for love.
5. (Rare.) Attractiveness to opposite sex.
6. Fate line—success according to its length.
7. (Rare.) Unusual success or fame.
8. Health line—good in inverse ratio to its length and depth.
9. The number of lines at 9 indicate the number of marriages

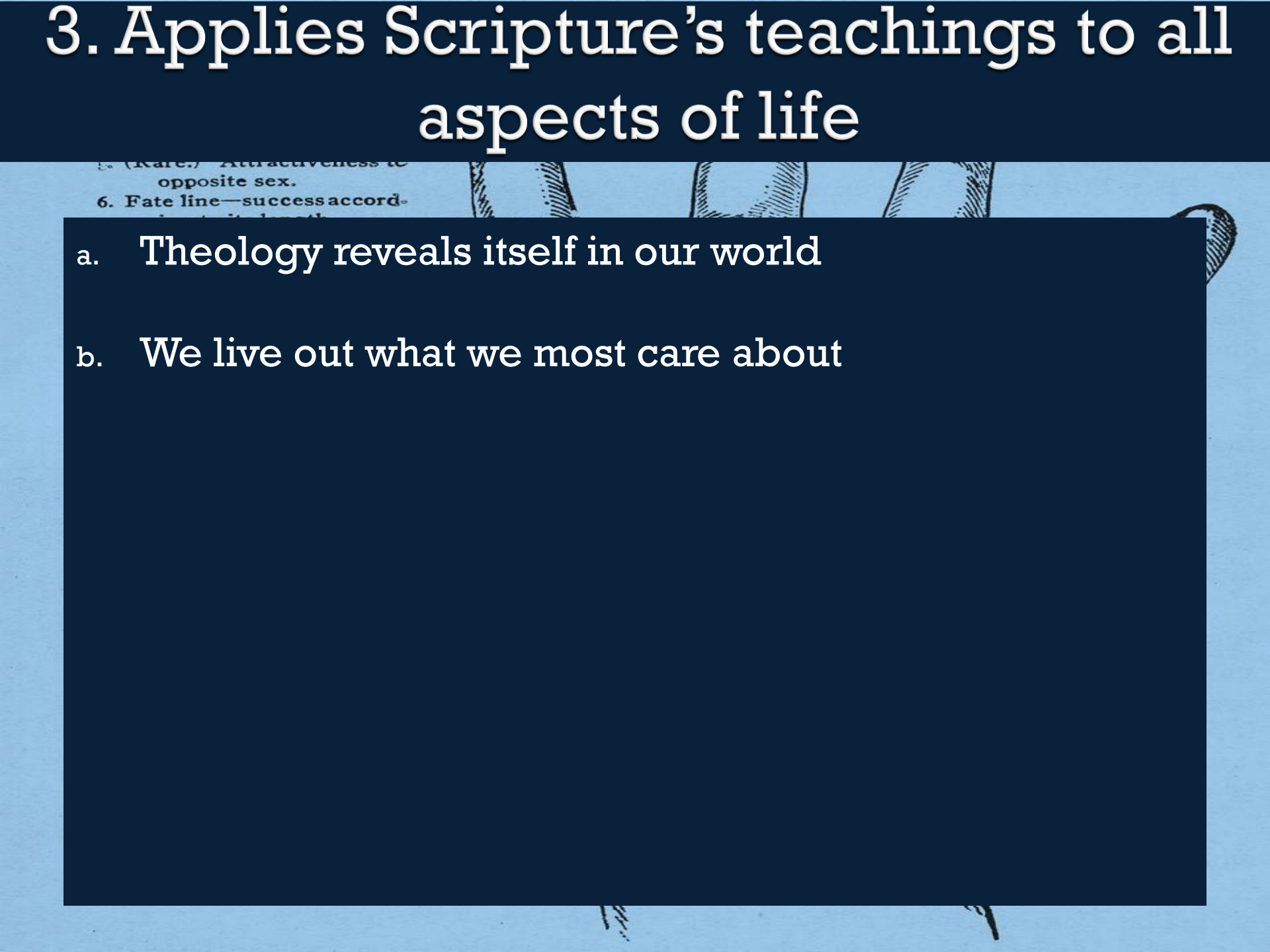


# 3. Applies Scripture's teachings to all aspects of life

- a. Theology reveals itself in our world



# 3. Applies Scripture's teachings to all aspects of life

- 
- The background of the slide features a light blue-toned image of a palmistry chart. The chart shows the lines of a hand, with some text labels visible at the top. A large, dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the lower portion of the chart, containing the main text of the slide.
5. (Care.) Attractiveness to opposite sex.  
6. Fate line—success according to its length.
- a. Theology reveals itself in our world
  - b. We live out what we most care about

# 3. Applies Scripture's teachings to all aspects of life

- a. Theology reveals itself in our world
- b. We live out what we most care about
- c. Theology that does not lead to practice is not theology; it is idolatry set up to serve the pupil rather than the master.

# 3. Applies Scripture's teachings to all aspects of life

- a. Theology reveals itself in our world
- b. We live out what we most care about
- c. Theology that does not lead to practice is not theology; it is idolatry set up to serve the pupil rather than the master.
- d. Theology then should be applied; it should produce changed Christlike people (not just nice, moral people)



**“The fundamental work of theology is to understand the Bible, God’s Word, and apply it to the needs of God’s people.”**

**-John Frame, “30 Suggestions for Theological Students and Young Theologians”**

# III. Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life

---

- a. Introduction: How do you plead?
- b. So where do we go from here? To The Bible
- c. Theology According to the Bible
- d. What the Bible Teaches Us About Theology
- e. Our Proposal: A Theology for Life
  - i. A Theology of Life works through the Spirit to:
  - ii. Conclusion: A Theology of Life is



# ii. Conclusion:

A Theology for Life is:

# ii. Conclusion:

A Theology for Life is:

1. A lens for the way we view ourselves, the world, and God



# ii. Conclusion:

A Theology for Life is:

1. A lens for the way we view ourselves, the world, and God
2. A way by which we are confronted on all levels of being a human. This is what we are made for and God is the only one who can really satisfy each aspect of our personhood

# ii. Conclusion:

A Theology for Life is:

1. A lens for the way we view ourselves, the world, and God
2. A way by which we are confronted on all levels of being a human. This is what we are made for and God is the only one who can really satisfy each aspect of our personhood
3. A Helpful Corrective

# ii. Conclusion:

A Theology for Life is:

1. A lens for the way we view ourselves, the world, and God
2. A way by which we are confronted on all levels of being a human. This is what we are made for and God is the only one who can really satisfy each aspect of our personhood
3. A Helpful Corrective
4. Not just an academic discipline, an experience, or a manipulation; it is a way of life

# Why Theology Matters

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- I. Introduction
- II. Our Problems with Theology
- III. A Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life
- IV. Putting it into Practice: Why a Theology for Life Matters

# iv. Putting it into Practice

---

- a. How A Theology for Life Helps Us Read Our Bibles

# iv. Putting it into Practice

---

- a. How A Theology for Life Helps Us Read Our Bibles
  - i. Why start here?

# iv. Putting it into Practice

---

- a. How A Theology for Life Helps Us Read Our Bibles
  - i. Why start here?
    - 1. Scripture: A Basic Building Block for the Christian Life—  
authority, revelation, etc.

# iv. Putting it into Practice

---

- a. How A Theology for Life Helps Us Read Our Bibles
  - i. Why start here?
    1. Scripture: A Basic Building Block for the Christian Life—authority, revelation, etc.
    2. Scripture is the final authority for all theology



# iv. Putting it into Practice

---

- a. How A Theology for Life Helps Us Read Our Bibles
  - i. Why start here?
    1. Scripture: A Basic Building Block for the Christian Life—authority, revelation, etc.
    2. Scripture is the final authority for all theology
    3. If we see how Theology affects/helps our reading of Scripture we will see what theology can do for the rest of our lives

# iv. Putting it into Practice

---

- a. How A Theology for Life Helps Us Read Our Bibles
  - i. Why start here?
  - ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life



## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

### 1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)

## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
  - a. Head—Analysis

## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

### 1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)

a. Head—Analysis

b. Sample Question: What does the author want to address in this particular passage?

## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)

## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)
  - a. Head—Analysis and Synthesis



## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)
  - a. Head—Analysis and Synthesis
  - b. Sample Question: Why is this passage here, in this section of Scripture?

## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)
3. The Play (Whole-Bible Assessment)

## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

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    - ii. What does it say about what has happened before its place in the story of Scripture?

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1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)
3. The Play (Whole-Bible Assessment)
  - a. Head—Synthesis and Analysis
  - b. Sample Questions:
    - i. Why is this passage in the Bible?
    - ii. What does it say about what has happened before its place in the story of Scripture?
    - iii. What does it say about what will happen after its place in Scripture?

## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)
3. The Play (Whole-Bible Assessment)
4. The Director's Commentary (Theological Assessment)



## ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life

1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)
3. The Play (Whole-Bible Assessment)
4. The Director's Commentary (Theological Assessment)
  - a. Head: How does this text speak to our understanding of God? Man? Sin? Christ? Etc.

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1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
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  - a. Head: How does this text speak to our understanding of God? Man? Sin? Christ? Etc.
  - b. Heart: How does this help me worship?

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1. The Scene (Textual Assessment)
2. The Act (Epochal Assessment)
3. The Play (Whole-Bible Assessment)
4. The Director's Commentary (Theological Assessment)
  - a. Head: How does this text speak to our understanding of God? Man? Sin? Christ? Etc.
  - b. Heart: How does this help me worship?
  - c. Hands: How does this change me? My family? My church? My work? My world?

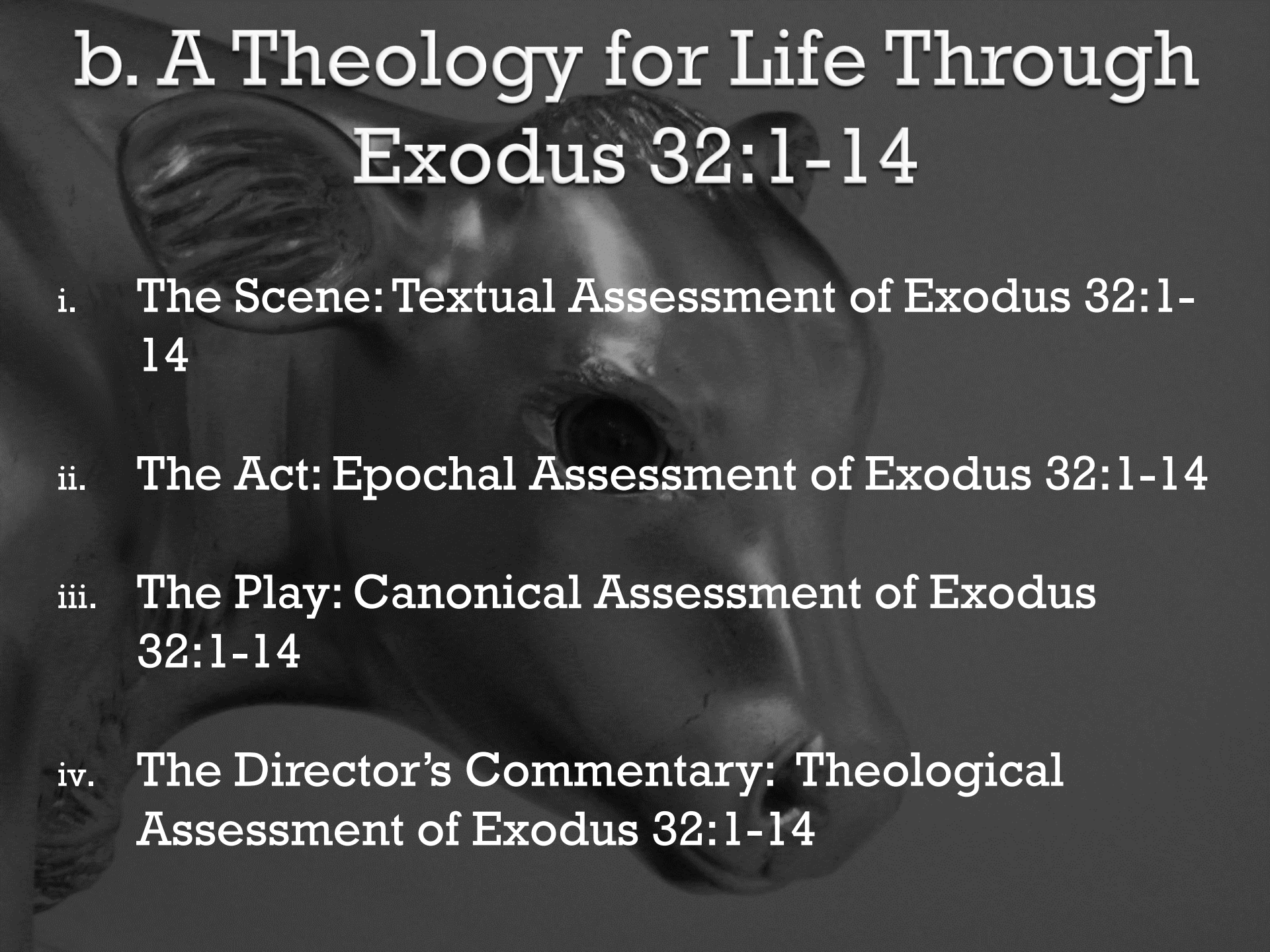
# iv. Putting it into Practice

---

- a. How A Theology for Life Helps Us Read Our Bibles
  - i. Why start here?
  - ii. Methodology: Following the Bible to a Theology for Life
  
- b. A Theology for Life Through Exodus 32:1-14

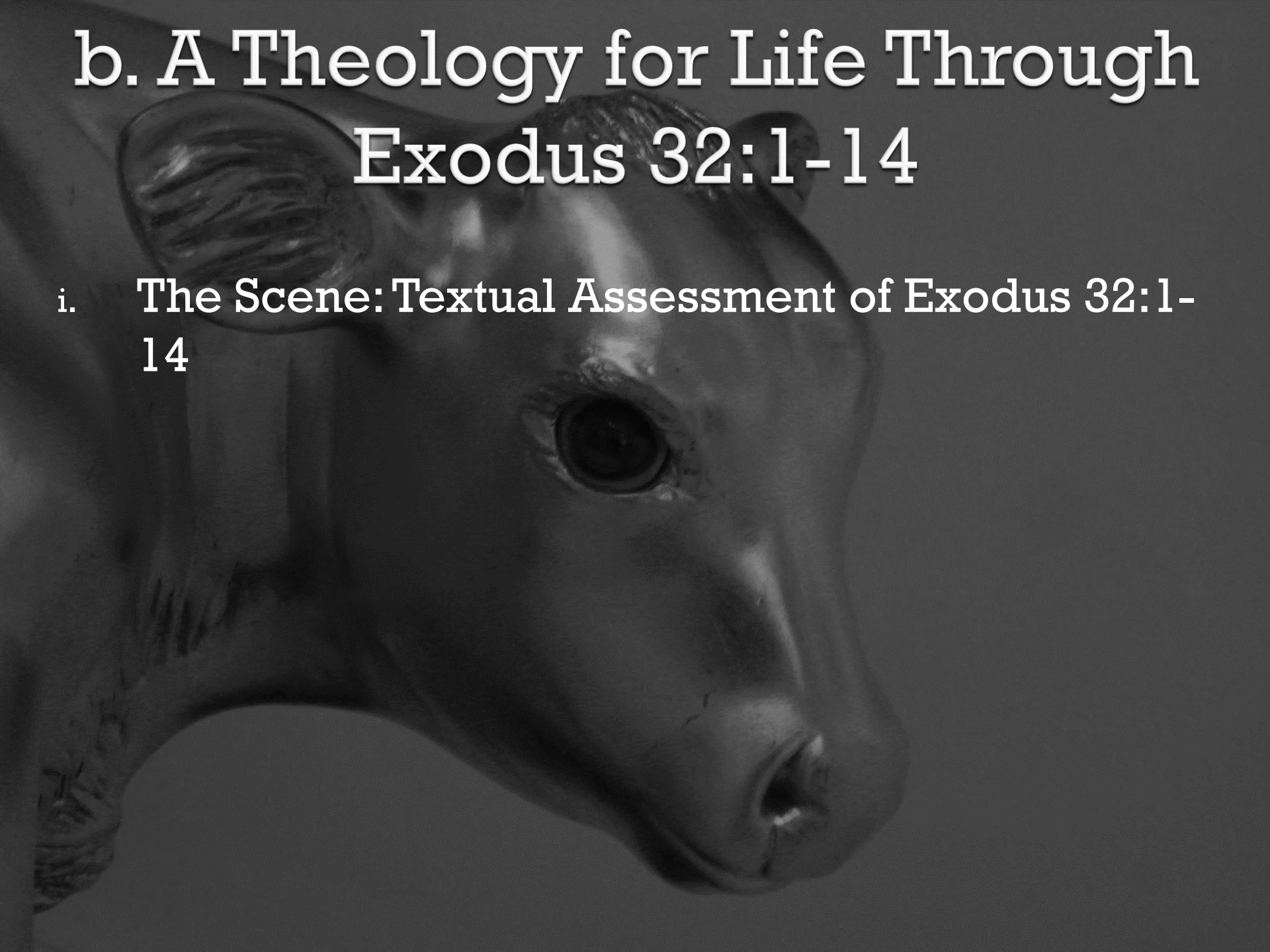






# **b. A Theology for Life Through Exodus 32:1-14**

- i. The Scene: Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14**
- ii. The Act: Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14**
- iii. The Play: Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14**
- iv. The Director's Commentary: Theological Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14**



# b. A Theology for Life Through Exodus 32:1-14

- i. The Scene: Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14



# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

### 1. Setting/Scene:

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. Conflict: Idolatry/Worship

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. **Setting/Scene:** Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. **Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:**
  - a. Transfer of the center of authority of faith in Yahweh from Moses to a golden calf

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. **Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai**
2. **Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:**
  - a. **Transfer of the center of authority of faith in Yahweh from Moses to a golden calf**
  - b. **Who will mediate?**

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

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1. **Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai**
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  - b. **Who will mediate?**
    - i. **Moses mediates between God and Israel**

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

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  - a. **Transfer of the center of authority of faith in Yahweh from Moses to a golden calf**
  - b. **Who will mediate?**
    - i. **Moses mediates between God and Israel**
    - ii. **With Moses gone access to God has been cut off, and another deity is desired**

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

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1. **Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai**
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  - a. **Transfer of the center of authority of faith in Yahweh from Moses to a golden calf**
  - b. **Who will mediate?**
    - i. **Moses mediates between God and Israel**
    - ii. **With Moses gone access to God has been cut off, and another deity is desired**
    - iii. **The calf becomes the new representative of the people before God and gods (Aaron: God; people: gods)**



# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:
  - a. Transfer of the center of authority of faith in Yahweh from Moses to a golden calf
  - b. Who will mediate?
    - i. Moses mediates between God and Israel
    - ii. With Moses gone access to God has been cut off, and another deity is desired
    - iii. The calf becomes the new representative of the people before God and gods (Aaron: God; people: gods)
      1. The forbidden image compromises Yahweh's transcendence, holiness, and covenant stipulations

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. **Setting/Scene:** Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. **Conflict:** Idolatry/Worship:
3. **Rising Action in the Narrative:**

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:
3. Rising Action in the Narrative:
  - a. Command to make a god

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:
3. Rising Action in the Narrative:
  - a. Command to make a god
  - b. Creation of the calf

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:
3. Rising Action in the Narrative:
  - a. Command to make a god
  - b. Creation of the calf
  - c. God responds to have Moses go down

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:
3. Rising Action in the Narrative:
  - a. Command to make a god
  - b. Creation of the calf
  - c. God responds to have Moses go down
  - d. God will judge

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. **Setting/Scene:** Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. **Conflict:** Idolatry/Worship:
3. **Rising Action in the Narrative:**
4. **Climax:**

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. **Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai**
2. **Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:**
3. **Rising Action in the Narrative:**
4. **Climax: Moses mediates between God and men**



# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. **Setting/Scene:** Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. **Conflict:** Idolatry/Worship:
3. **Rising Action in the Narrative:**
4. **Climax:** Moses mediates between God and men
5. **Resolution:**

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Setting/Scene: Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. Conflict: Idolatry/Worship:
3. Rising Action in the Narrative:
4. Climax: Moses mediates between God and men
5. Resolution: God relents from judgment of the people—  
the promises of God stand in light of Israel's sin

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

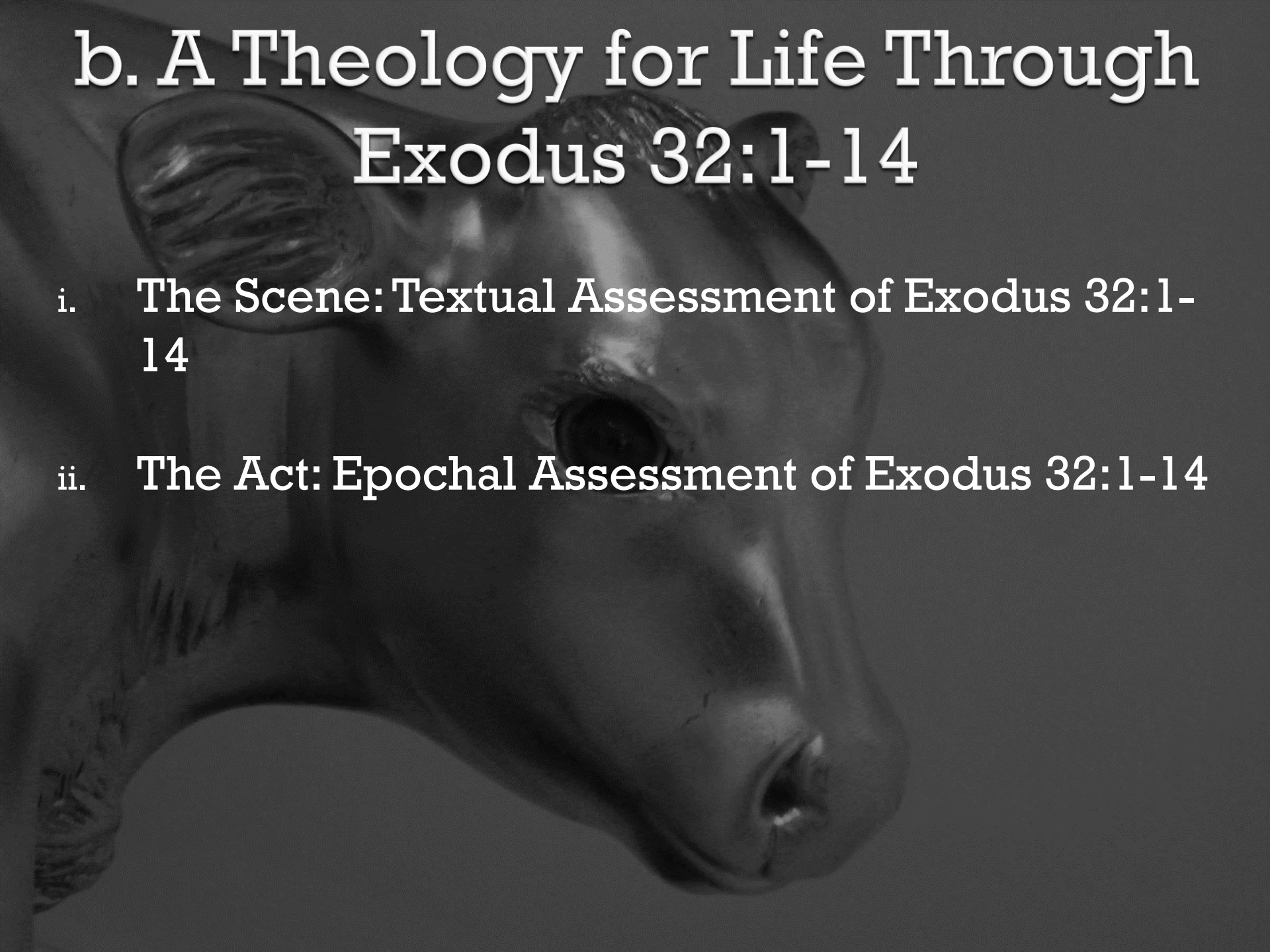
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2. **Conflict:** Idolatry/Worship:
3. **Rising Action in the Narrative:**
4. **Climax:** Moses mediates between God and men
5. **Resolution:** God relents from judgment of the people—the promises of God stand in light of Israel's sin
6. **Purpose:**

# i. The Scene:

## Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

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1. **Setting/Scene:** Plain of Mt. Sinai and the Top of Mt. Sinai
2. **Conflict:** Idolatry/Worship:
3. **Rising Action in the Narrative:**
4. **Climax:** Moses mediates between God and men
5. **Resolution:** God relents from judgment of the people—the promises of God stand in light of Israel's sin
6. **Purpose:** Moses formally becomes the covenant mediator between God and Israel—he now stands as a representative of the holy God before the sinful people.



# b. A Theology for Life Through Exodus 32:1-14

- i. The Scene: Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14
- ii. The Act: Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
  - a. After the 10 commandments and covenant ceremony

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
  - a. After the 10 commandments and covenant ceremony
  - b. Before the establishment of the tabernacle



## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
  - a. Breaking of first and second commandment

**You shall have no other God's before  
me.**

**You shall not make for yourself a carved  
image, or any likeness of anything that  
is in heaven above, or that is in the earth  
beneath, or that is in the water  
underneath them.**

**(Exodus 20-3-6)**

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
  - a. Breaking of first and second commandment
  - b. Israel does not deserve the gift of the Tabernacle

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
  - a. Breaking of first and second commandment
  - b. Israel does not deserve the gift of the Tabernacle
    - i. God does not dwell with sinners and covenant breakers

# ii. The Act:

## Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
  - a. Breaking of first and second commandment
  - b. Israel does not deserve the gift of the Tabernacle
    - i. God does not dwell with sinners and covenant breakers
    - ii. Why does he remain with these idolaters?

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
3. Why is this in the Pentateuch?









## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
3. Why is this in the Pentateuch?
  - a. Sin prevails?

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
3. Why is this in the Pentateuch?
  - a. Sin prevails?
  - b. God's grace prevails against sin

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
3. Why is this in the Pentateuch?
  - a. Sin prevails?
  - b. God's grace prevails against sin
  - c. The need for a new covenant

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
3. Why is this in the Pentateuch?
4. Why is this in the OT?

## ii. The Act:

### Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
3. Why is this in the Pentateuch?
4. Why is this in the OT?
  - a. A microcosm of what Israel does throughout the biblical narrative

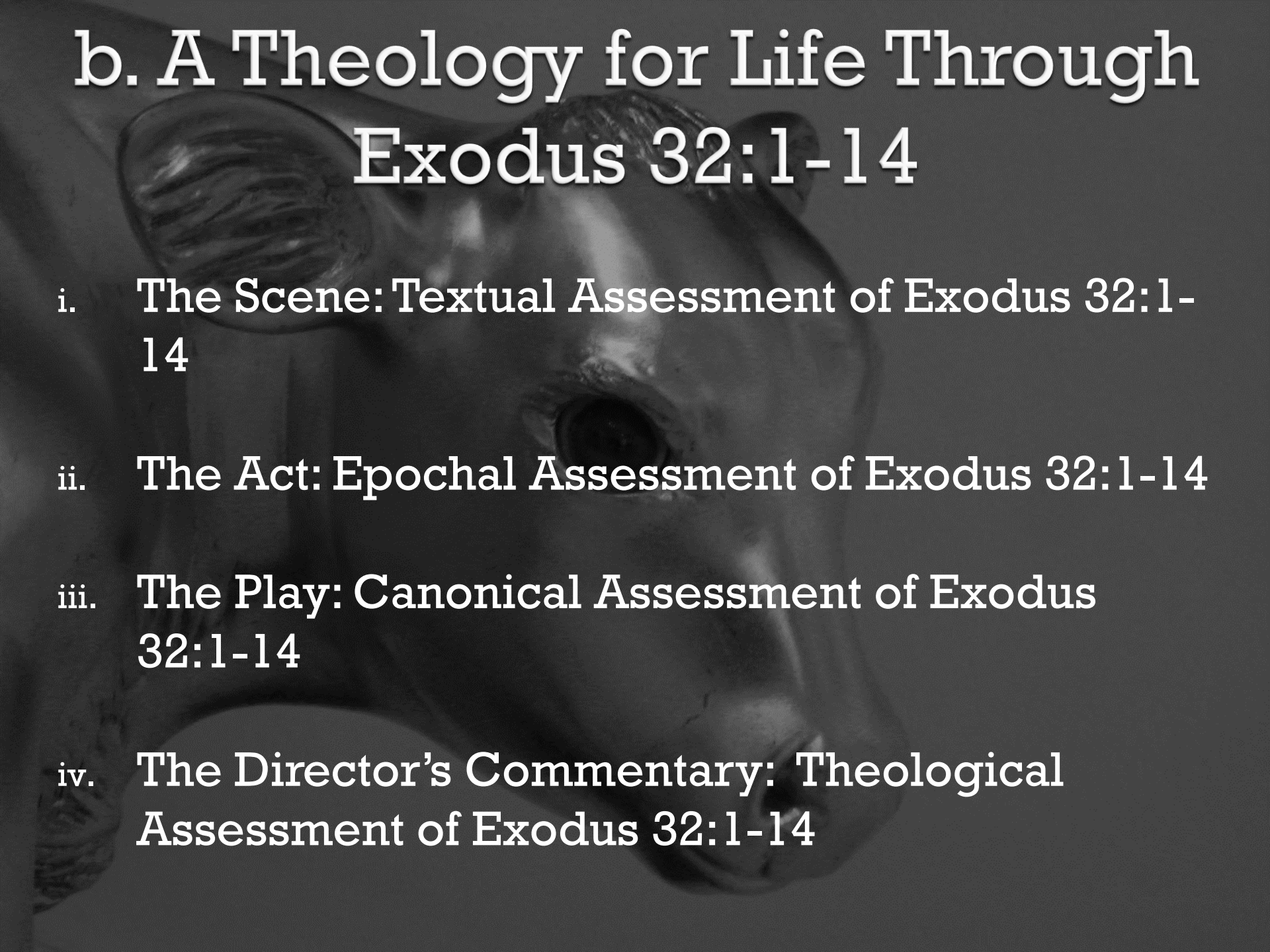
# ii. The Act:

## Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. Where is this passage found in the book of Exodus?
2. What does its placement in Exodus tell us?
3. Why is this in the Pentateuch?
4. Why is this in the OT?
  - a. A microcosm of what Israel does throughout the biblical narrative
  - b. The explanation for a new covenant—we need to know how a holy God remains with this people and how that will be different in the future





# b. A Theology for Life Through Exodus 32:1-14

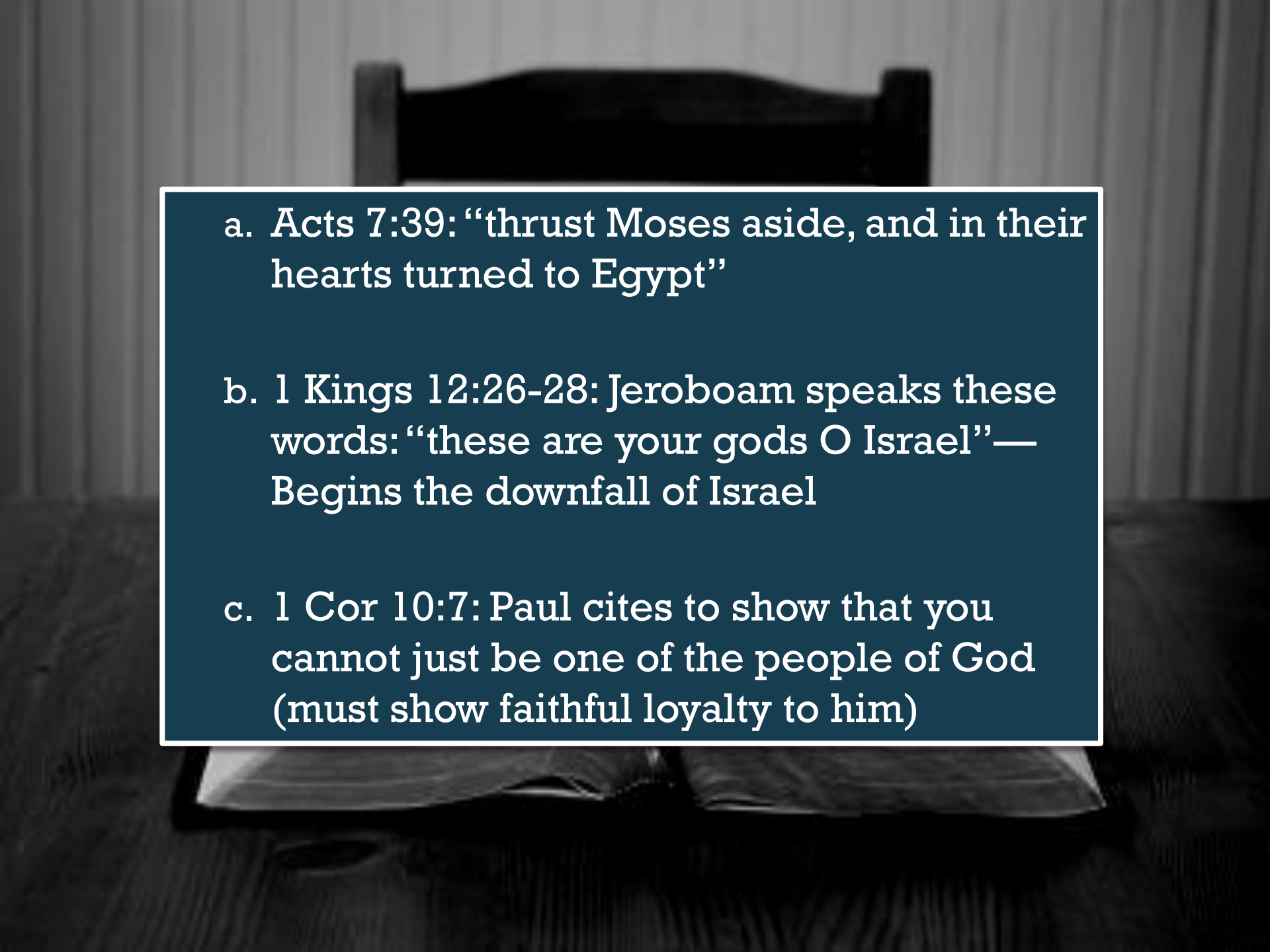
- i. The Scene: Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14
- ii. The Act: Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14
- iii. The Play: Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

# iii. The Play:

## Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. What does this passage have to do with the rest of the Bible?

- 
- An open book is placed on a wooden chair. A dark teal rectangular box with a white border is superimposed over the center of the image, containing three bullet points in white text. The background is a blurred indoor setting with light-colored curtains.
- a. Acts 7:39: “thrust Moses aside, and in their hearts turned to Egypt”
  - b. 1 Kings 12:26-28: Jeroboam speaks these words: “these are your gods O Israel”—  
Begins the downfall of Israel
  - c. 1 Cor 10:7: Paul cites to show that you cannot just be one of the people of God (must show faithful loyalty to him)

# iii. The Play:

## Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. What does this passage have to do with the rest of the Bible?
2. What does this passage have to do with Jesus Christ, our salvation, and the gospel?

# iii. The Play:

## Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. What does this passage have to do with the rest of the Bible?
2. What does this passage have to do with Jesus Christ, our salvation, and the gospel?
  - a. The Answer to the Problem

# iii. The Play:

## Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. What does this passage have to do with the rest of the Bible?
2. What does this passage have to do with Jesus Christ, our salvation, and the gospel?
  - a. The Answer to the Problem
  - b. The Better Mediator

# iii. The Play:

## Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

1. What does this passage have to do with the rest of the Bible?
2. What does this passage have to do with Jesus Christ, our salvation, and the gospel?
  - a. The Answer to the Problem
  - b. The Better Mediator
  - c. The Great Intercessor

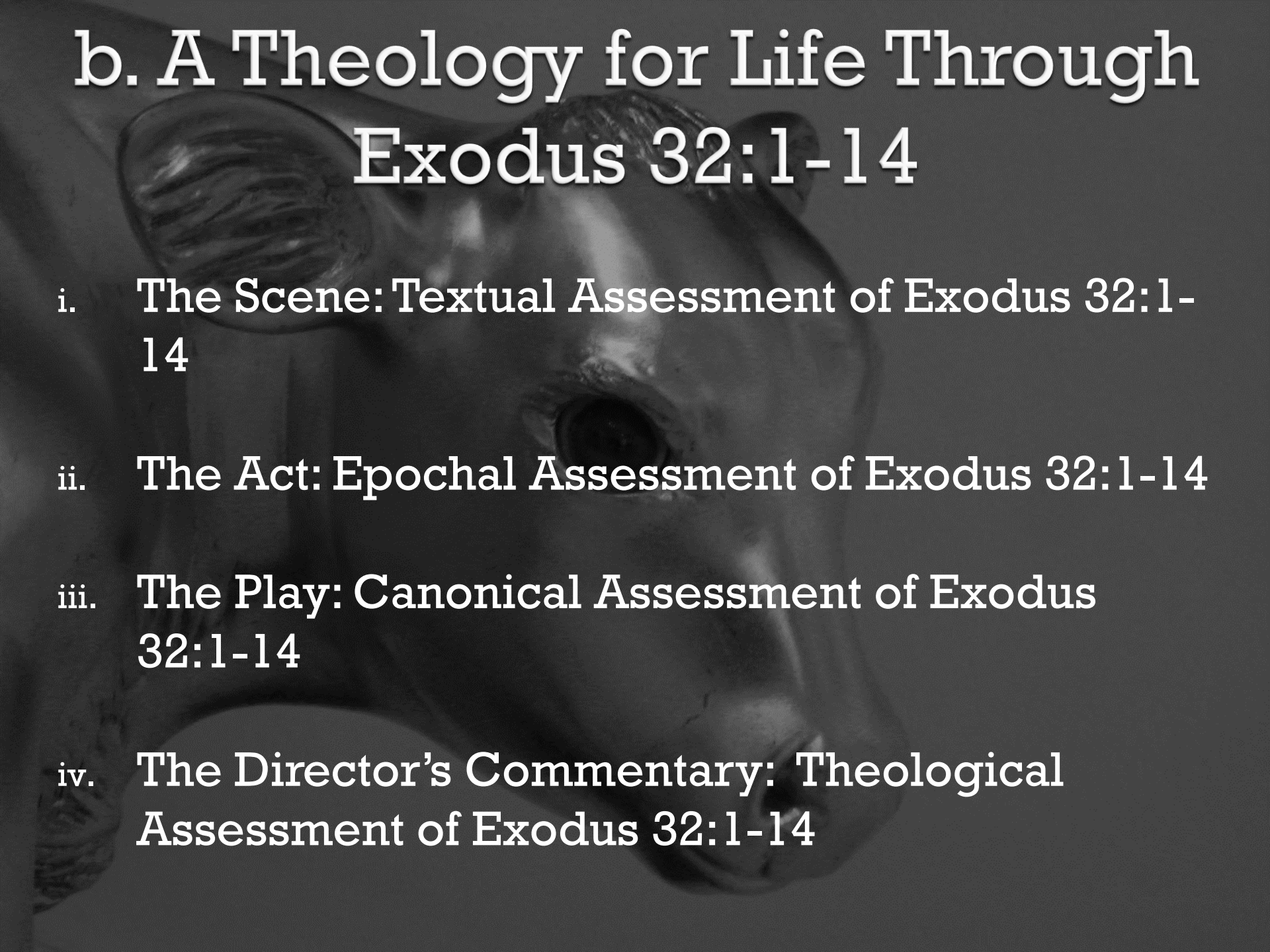
# iii. The Play:

## Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

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1. What does this passage have to do with the rest of the Bible?
2. What does this passage have to do with Jesus Christ, our salvation, and the gospel?
  - a. The Answer to the Problem
  - b. The Better Mediator
  - c. The Great Intercessor
  - d. Our Covenant Keeper





# b. A Theology for Life Through Exodus 32:1-14

- i. The Scene: Textual Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14
- ii. The Act: Epochal Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14
- iii. The Play: Canonical Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14
- iv. The Director's Commentary: Theological Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

# iv. The Director's Commentary: Theological Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

## 1. Head

# iv. The Director's Commentary: Theological Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

---

## 1. Head

- a. What does this passage tell us about God?

# iv. The Director's Commentary: Theological Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

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## 1. Head

- a. What does this passage tell us about God?
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  - iii. Contradictory?

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  - ii. Idolatrous nature—Try to make our own way to God
  - iii. We need a covenant keeper

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- a. What does this passage tell us about God?
- b. What does this passage tell us about humanity? How does this passage show us mankind's need for Jesus?
- c. Theological Issue: What does this text tell us about divine immutability—God does not change?



## c. Theological Issue: Immutability

- i. God does not change, but the text says God relented

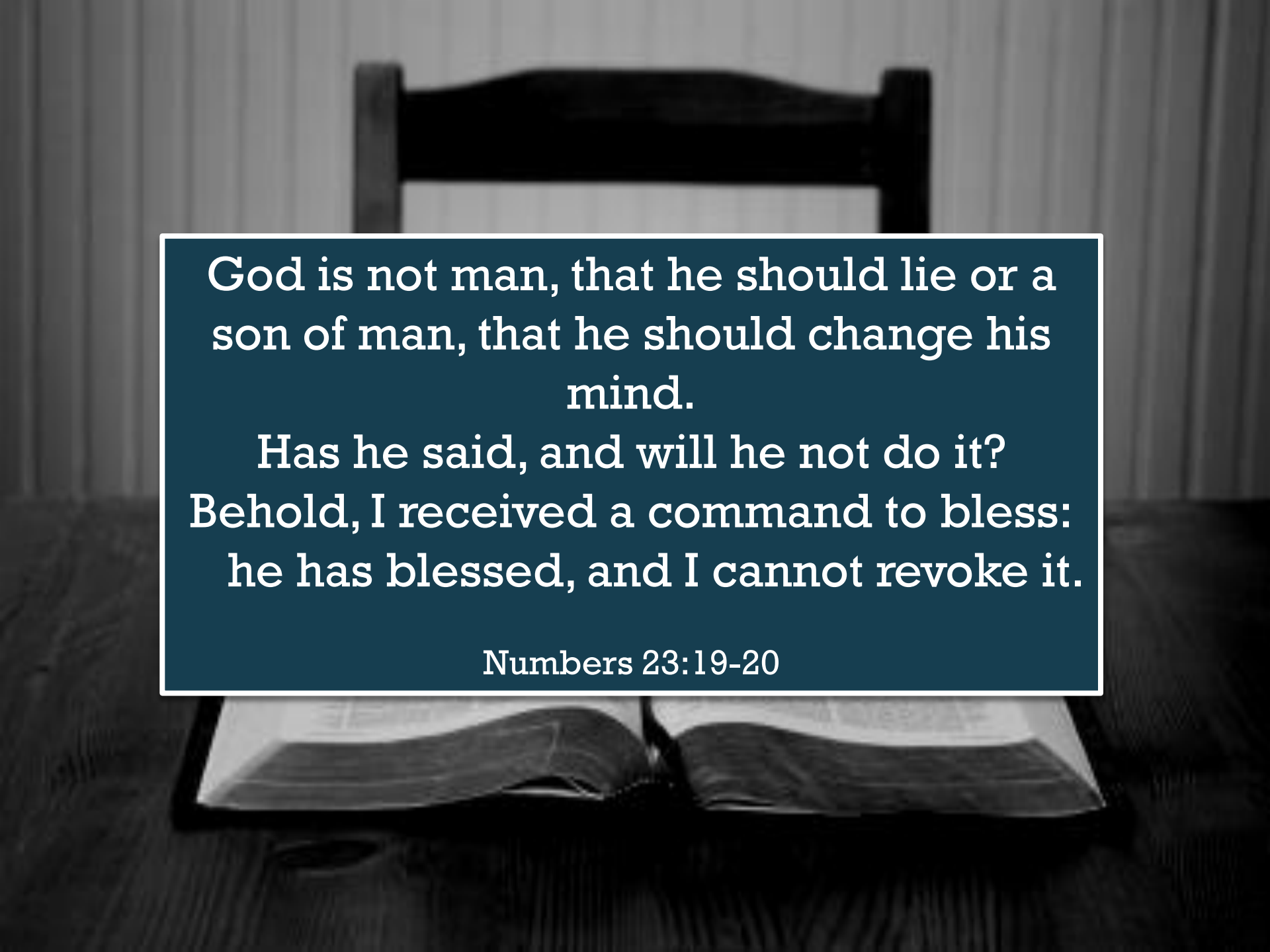
## c. Theological Issue: Immutability

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We either change because we lack something or we are changing for the good or the better.

## c. Theological Issue: Immutability

- i. God does not change, but the text says God relented
- ii. How do we understand this in light of the rest of the Bible?

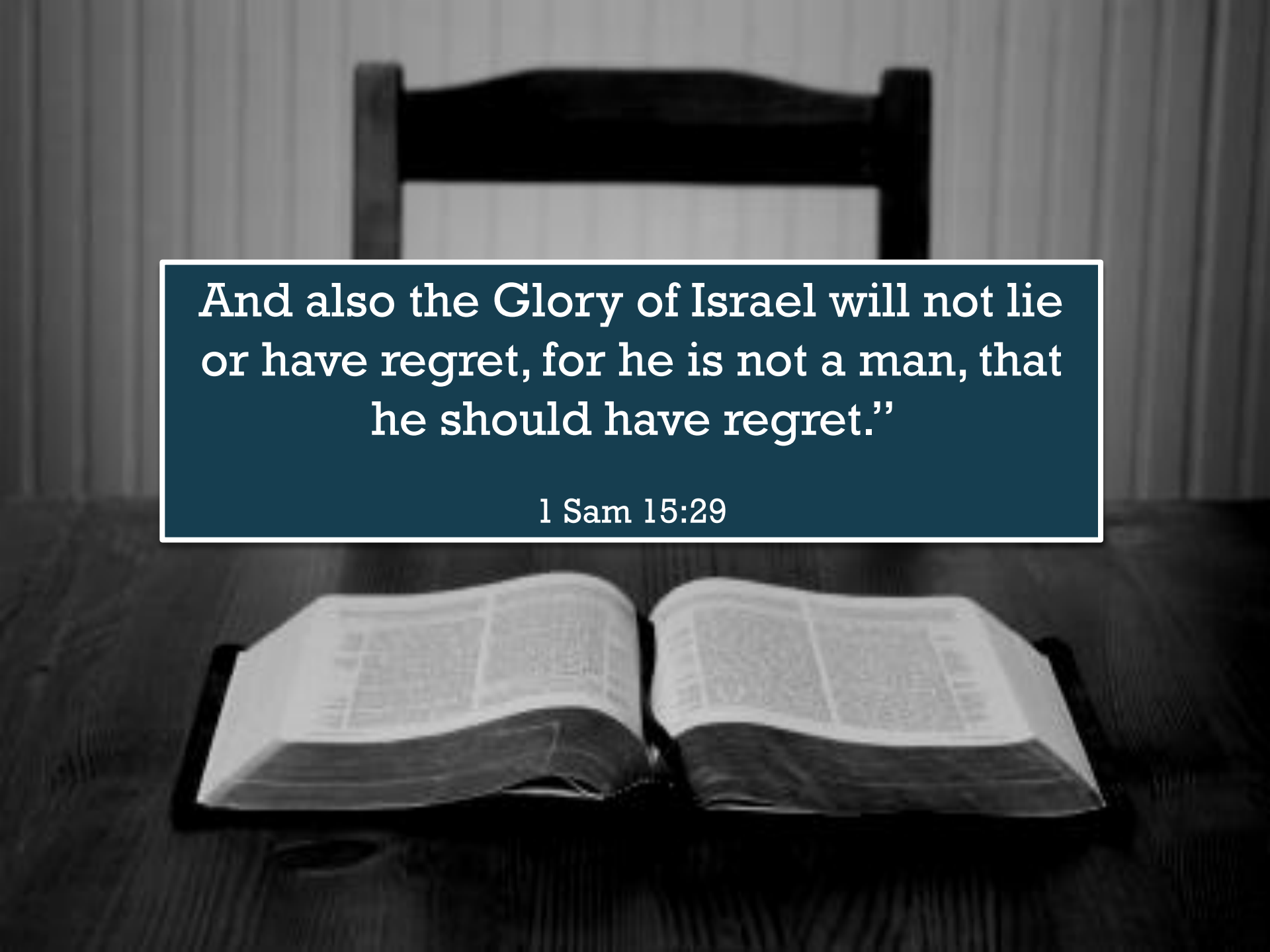


God is not man, that he should lie or a  
son of man, that he should change his  
mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?  
Behold, I received a command to bless:  
he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.

Numbers 23:19-20





**And also the Glory of Israel will not lie  
or have regret, for he is not a man, that  
he should have regret.”**

1 Sam 15:29

The background of the image shows a dark wooden chair back with a curved top rail and two vertical posts, positioned behind a dark wooden table. On the table, an open Bible is laid flat, showing two pages of text. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the wood and the pages of the Bible.

I, the Lord, do not change. So you, the  
descendants do not change.

Malachi 3:6

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  - 3. God *does* change in his relationship with mutable creatures
  - 4. The basis of his relational change is his unchanging nature
  - 5. What is the purpose of this mutability? To move Moses into the role of the covenant Mediator—to force us to look forward to a better mediator to come in Jesus



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1. Head
2. Heart
  - a. How does the Text Lead to Worship?

# iv. The Director's Commentary: Theological Assessment of Exodus 32:1-14

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1. Head
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2. Heart
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  - b. Sample questions:

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viii. Convictions to be lived?

# Why Theology Matters

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- I. Introduction
- II. Our Problems with Theology
- III. A Proposal for Theology: Theology for Life
- IV. Putting it into Practice: Why a Theology for Life Matters
- I. Conclusion: A Call to a Theology for Life

# V. A Call to a Theology for Life

- a. Theology matters because knowing God rightly  
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  - i. True Christian worship must be theologically informed; otherwise it is emotionalism. Theology must be worship centered otherwise it is just dry scholarship.
  - ii. We become what we worship: Better know God or we will become settle for idols

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- b. Theology matters because it fuels real worship:
- c. Theology matters because it applies to our lives:
  - i. The very core of what it means to be a Christian is theologically shaped
  - ii. This is simply discipleship and discipleship is by nature theological: We are called to follow Christ and become like him. If we want to follow Jesus we need to know him. We need to embrace a theology for life.



THE  
*Mission of  
Theology*  
AND  
*Theology as  
Mission*

J. ANDREW KIRK

When we investigate theology we are “investigating an operation on which hangs in large part the healthy life of the whole Christian community, for if we do not get the theological task right, every other task is likely out of kilter.”

-J. Andrew Kirk, *The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission*, 2.

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- b. Theology matters because it fuels real worship:
- c. Theology matters because it applies to our lives:
- d. Theology matters because it can be used by God to put things in the right place:

i. Theology speaks God's thoughts  
to us where we are

ii. Theology seeks to answer real  
questions



iii. Theology clarifies the voice of  
God for our world

iv. Theology helps us understand  
ourselves and the world

v. Theology helps us understand  
God

vi. Theology prepares us for the  
hard times

vii. Theology prepares us to hope  
beyond this world

viii. Theology prepares us to  
be/preach hope to this world

ix. Theology helps us be obedient

x. Theology helps us be the church  
to one another



xi. Theology makes the gospel truer  
and bigger in our lives

xii. Theology can be used to  
conform us to Jesus

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- e. Theology matters because it is what we will do for eternity

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- e. Theology matters because it is what we will do for eternity
- f. Theology matters because it demands we come to grips with how we are living and what we are living for



**Theology is not a game. It is not an academic exercise. Theology is a matter of life and death. Theology matters.**



رعايا الصليب من أتباع الكنيسة المصرية المحاربة

The people of the cross, the followers of the hostile Egyptian Church

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- g. Conclusion

# Use your Theology for Life

- a. Use theology to know your God

# Use your Theology for Life

- a. Use theology to know your God
- b. Use theology to worship your God



# Use your Theology for Life

- a. Use theology to know your God
- b. Use theology to worship your God
- c. Use theology to live like God in this world,  
and with your God in the world to come

# Further Resources

Kelly Kopic, *A Little Book for New Theologians*

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God & Concise Theology*

Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine & Systematic Theology*

John Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord & Systematic Theology*

Tom Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*