

Why We Don't Learn Theology

I have taught many students in various contexts, for example, non-Christian, university students in Central Europe, seminary students preparing for the ministry in the United States, and believers within various churches (Baptist, Presbyterian, charismatics, for instance), as well as Christians in Argentina. Based upon my experience, I have noticed several recurring obstacles to theological education. These are listed below for your consideration.

Do any of these apply to you? (Check the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ Naive attitude: Some prefer not to know and they remain ignorant by choice.
- ☐ Curious but uncommitted: Many want intellectual entertainment, but are unwilling to discipline their minds or submit to programmatic study.
- ☐ Committed but undisciplined: Many view learning like a cafeteria and consume what seems appealing rather than balance and nutrition.
- ☐ Intellectual pride: Some think they know enough already or that they know best the path to knowledge.
- ☐ Independent spirit: Some approach theological education based upon what is easiest or can be learned in isolation with a minimum of intellectual accountability.
- ☐ Consumer approach: Some "shop" for knowledge, learning formats, and instructors that conform to their "buying" preferences. When study becomes difficult or boring, they take their "business" elsewhere.
- ☐ Laziness: Some are not willing to sacrifice or pay the price of learning.
- ☐ Busyness: Some are overwhelmed by work or over-committed to the expectations of others.
- ☐ Triviality: Some are conditioned by technology to learn by sound bite or visually through video, so they are not prepared to read, write, or reflect deeply.
- ☐ Passivity: Some fulfill the role assigned to them by society -- intellectual simplicity, private religiosity, and subjective spirituality.
- ☐ Sacred-secular dichotomy: Some comply with modern secularism that declares spirituality and worldview are private and personal only.
- ☐ Social obstacles: Many are distracted by the demands of culture (sports, parties, religion, family).
- ☐ Anti-intellectualism: Some resist study and reflection because their religious tradition minimizes the need for theology or thinking.
- ☐ Fundamentalism: Some oppose study due to separation from the world and do not interact with culture or worldview.

- Capitulation: Some embrace the postmodern narrative and myth of progress -- the past is irrelevant, authority is questionable, personal authenticity is paramount, and every perspective is equally valid.
- Spiritual resistance: Some reject or delay theological education because it is a spiritual battle that they are losing for a variety of reasons (listed above).