

00:00 Okay, there we go. So, video two for this, session one, exploring theology course, where we're looking at the question, who is God?

00:13 So, as I said at the end of the last video, we're going to be looking, in this video, powered up by some cake and some tea, we're going to be looking at, the sources of that we've been, drawing on as we, ponder and consider these, this question of who is God.

00:30 so, to help us in this, I want to just tell you, a little story about when I was, young, and, and then use that as a, a springboard for talking about these different sources so When I was young, I'm, I'm the youngest in my family, I'm the, as it were, the last

00:56 minute dot com. I was the, I was the surprise, and, my siblings, older than me, especially my, older brother, he's, several years older than me, and when he hit his teens, he, got to that point where you suddenly start, you know, you've had dinner, and then, half an hour later

01:13 , forty-five minutes later, I'm hungry, is there anything to eat, type of thing. And I was several years younger, but I saw my big brother doing this, and I thought, oh, that's what you do.

01:27 Okay, so, I tried playing the same kind of trick, not, not trick, but you know what I mean, same kind of thing on my mother, and, so, an hour after dinner, I'd go up to mum and I'd say, M I'm hungry, is there anything to eat?

01:42 By this stage, my poor mother, she'd had enough, and, so she said, oh, if you're hungry, then fine, I'll teach you how to cook.

01:51 And I would have been about seven or eight years old, and I, I, she taught me how to cook, and the first thing I think she taught me how to cook was an omelette.

02:02 And so, yeah, and so she showed me how to, you know, crack the eggs, whisk them up, make the omelette, so on and so forth.

02:11 And, she showed me the ingredients, so you've got eggs, you've got butter, you can use oil, different ways of doing omelettes, we'll come back to that in a, in, a little later on.

02:20 And, yeah, and, and, you know, here's your saucepan, get the saucepan nice and, you know, the frying pan, at a good temperature type of thing.

02:29 And, and then having whisked the eggs, then there's the question of what, what, what, are you gonna put some cheese, grated cheese in there, or is it just gonna be a plain omelette, are you gonna, or maybe something else you can mix in with it type of thing.

02:44 So, I learnt how to cook, started cooking at a very, very young age, and I've loved it ever since, and, and hence, as I say, there are gonna be a few food references as we go through, this course.

02:55 but one of the things there is that when I'm, when, when you're cooking, yeah, when you're cooking you're using ingredients, you're using all

sorts of different ingredients, and you combine them in certain ways to produce certain types of food.

03:08 And, thinking about these sauces that we're using, when we're exploring and thinking and learning to live theologically, these sauces are kind of like the ingredients, you know, we bring them in, in certain combinations and, and, and, and depending on how we do that, then we, we, we, we end

03:33 up with different, sort of theological basis. perspectives, so on and so forth. so I'm going to put a few of the, traditional ones, traditional ingredients, as it were, traditional sauces, on, on, on the, on the screen and I'm just going to give you a few, sort of notes

03:54 about each of those and then we're going to think about our own reflections and to the degree to which these have actually been the of things that we, that have been shaping our own thinking.

04:04 So there you go, enough talking about omelettes and cooking and on to our theological sources.

04:11 our first source, when it comes to thinking theologically, is going to be, here we go, scripture. Ah, the Bible. and within the tradition of the Church of England, and this course is primarily pitched to people who are part of the Church of England, or interested in becoming part of the Church of

04:32 England, or learning to think in the way that the Church of England encourages us to think, theologically, scripture is first and foremost.

04:40 It's the first and foremost source for all our theological reflection. And when we say scripture, we're meaning the Bible, and we're meaning Old and New Testaments, so it's not just the New Testament, it's the Old Testament, it's the whole of scripture.

04:58 Okay, so that's our first and foremost one. Then, in addition, we have tradition, and tradition evokes all sorts of different, things, in people's heads, and, the, the word has, meanings to do with, handing on, from one generation to the next type of thing, so, and, uhm.

05:22 There are traditions, you can think about traditionalism, which is, sort of, you know, well, this is the way we've always done it, blah, blah, blah, blah, type of thing, as opposed to tradition, which is more that these, this is, this is how the church has handed on things from one generation to the

05:37 next, and, things that are important within this are things like the creeds of the church, so there's the Apostles' Creed, and there's the Nicene Creed, to name two of the key ones, and there are also the councils of the church, the early church, over the first, sort of, four, five

05:59 hundred years of having these gatherings of bishops from all across the Mediterranean to thrash things out and work out what it is, and who is Jesus, and who's the spirit and is Jesus, you know, God, if Jesus is God, in

what sense is he God, and what's the relationship with God the Father, and what's

06:20 the spirit got to do with all of this, and so on and so forth, all that kind of thing. These councils, where they gather people together, these then become really key, uu touch points for us in our thinking today.

06:34 We are in a dialogue, not just only with people in our own time, but we are also in dialogue with people from the past, and one of the key things that people in the past have done is exactly what we're doing in our own time, which is engaging with Scripture.

06:48 So, in some senses, tradition is, our engagement. When we engage with tradition, what we're doing is we're engaging with a previous generation of tradition's engagement with Scripture.

07:00 So, there's a, a strong scriptural focus in there. when you had, with the councils, when they were, as I say, when they were duking things out and working out what it, who Jesus is and so on, the passages that they would go to that were really important, where they would go to, were, were,

07:18 were, were, was Scripture. so, yeah. Scripture, we keep coming back to Scripture. So, Scripture, tradition, and then, next one, reason.

07:30 Okay. So, what do we mean by reason? Well, reason is using our rational faculties to, to think things through in a logical, coherent, kind of way.

07:42 yeah. the meanings here, are interesting in the sense that when we talk about reason, because much of this, this kind of role of Scripture, tradition, and reason, as some of you may know, goes back to a guy called Richard Hooker, who was one of the early Church of England theologians  
08:04 , in the 16th century, and, he has this image of a third world three-legged stool type of thing, but the, the main leg of the stool is Scripture, and then you've got tradition, and then you've got reason, as the other smaller legs, as it were, of the stool.

08:20 It's, sometimes overdone as an image, but anyway, the reason, the question, then, when we come to reason is, because words change their meaning over time, don't they?

08:34 To a degree. And, so when, when we're talking about reason, we might think, well, independent of the tradition of the church, independent of Scripture, what do we think rationally about whatever it might be?

08:49 Whereas, earlier understandings of reason is that it's reason that has come within the orbit of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

08:58 So, we're it's, it's redeemed reason, as it were, which is nowadays less of how we think about reason. When we talk about, oh, different ways of approaching things theologically, there's Scripture, tradition, and reason, and when we come to reason, we're more minded in our own age to say, okay

09:18 , so we're looking at things scientifically, or we're looking at things, more philosophically, or, or we're looking at things, using our, our, our rational faculties in a way that is independent of Scripture and tradition.

09:33 Whereas earlier in our tradition, to a large degree, it was understanding that, well, when we're speaking of reason, it's not just reason free-floating and independent, but it's also reason which has been redeemed by the sanctifying of presence of the Holy Spirit.

09:48 so it's quite a different understanding there. And, so these are things to bear in mind, as we're thinking about, reason as a source for our theological reflection.

10:01 So, next one, up. Is... experience. And again, there's a similar come think. So, okay, so when we're talking about experience, is kind of, you know, uhm,...

10:11 obvious in one sense. your life and mine, it's built up of every day, all sorts of things that just happen and are around us.

10:20 And, you know, our lived experience is something that we talk about. which shapes how we think. it might be one thing to talk about something in the abstract.

10:31 But then, if we start saying, hmm, actually, uhh, uhh, uhh, you, you, you have a, a more concrete, real world experience of something.

10:40 it ceases to be a hypothetical. It becomes something very real for you. And so you go like, okay, I need to bring this experience to bear.

10:50 Now, this is, this, this focus on experience is commonly, linked to, John Wesley. the Methodist, he was, very familiar with the importance of scripture, tradition, and reason, but then he brought into the conversation this, source of experience.

11:12 Again, in our own day, the, the, the use of these words has slightly changed in the sense that in our time, we talk about experience as kind of the way I was just talking about it a moment ago, the experience.

11:23 Experience is something which is just like, well, this is what I, this is what I have encountered in my life.

11:28 I have got to know people, I have travelled, I have done things, and these have shaped my thinking, and therefore, in the light of this, yes, on the one hand, I might read this in the Bible, but my experience tells me, okay?

11:42 Wesley's understanding of experience was slightly different in that sense. It was my. Much more, you know how I was talking a moment ago about reason being sanctified by the spirit. with Wesley, he's talking about an experience which is illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

12:01 So again, it's, it's not that experience is sort of, uhh, there's a I-there's a barrier, there's a boundary around experience and- God's not allowed in type of thing.

12:13 No, for Wesley, it was very much that experience is something which is a domain, which is an area of life which God is active and if God goes in there and by the Holy Spirit changes our thinking or gives us an encounter of God in, and-and it's those experiences, for Wesley, which are important

12:35 for when- We're doing our theological uhhm, explorations. so again in this conversations, you'll hear people talk about things like reason and experience and the question to have the back of your mind is Are we talking about reason and experience in a way where they don't have anything to do with

12:55 God? Or do they have something to do with God in terms of the way that those, the reason and experience becomes an area of life where God is very much involved in shaping our thinking and so on and so forth.

13:08 So, or that we haven't encountered with God in an experience of the divine. So, those are four. I'm going to introduce a fifth one which is less commonly used.

13:18 Okay, so if you hear this business about sources of theology, the first theological reflection. Scripture, tradition, and reason, they're absolutely always there.

13:27 Experience has become very much a common one over the last, however many hundreds of years since Wesley. However, the one I want to add to this list as well is worship.

13:41 This is something over the last century has come to be seen to be very important in terms of a source.

13:48 For shaping our thinking, our theological reflecting, our theological weighing of things up, that worship actually shapes us. And we're going to come to that in more detail later on in the course.

14:03 but, you know, what we, especially within our Church of England, Anglican kind of setting. how, How we worship really shapes, if you, if it's, it's sometimes said, if you want to know what an Anglican believes, just join them for worship and see how they are worshipping and what they are

14:22 saying and doing as they worship. That shows you what they believe type of thing. So worship really shapes our understanding of God is, is something which, the degree to which it does is something that's become increasingly, explored over the last hundred years or so. So, you've got the three main

14:42 ones, that scripture tradition and reason and then you've got experience from Wesley and then you've got worship as the additional one which we're going to come in to explore more as the course comes on when we come to things like why the church is important and how do we worship?

14:57 How do we pray? Okay. So, what I'd like you to do now. there we go, that's right, just looking over at my notes.



15:11 I'd like you to think back to the things that we were talking about earlier, what we've been mulling over, what was significant for you in terms of what shape.

15:23 Do remember I was asking those- questions in the other video about growing up to people, talk about God, if so, when, who, where, I had to think.

15:31 do any of your friends, families, so on and so forth, likewise, and do- does what they think, say, and effect, what you think.

15:38 do you read the Bible, do you go to church? do you read books, uhh, listen to podcasts, what's YouTube, so on and so forth, okay. So now what I'd like you to do, and we'll do the same kind of- the thing, as we did before.

15:50 I'm gonna give you about five minutes in between each, just to sort of mull things over, and the idea is to think, about, uhh, those kind of things, but in the light of scripture, it's just like, to what degree, what part is played in your thinking, by, and let's start with the first

16:12 . last one. What, what, what role is played, by scripture? When it comes to your thinking about the question, who is God?

16:22 Okay, so that's given you a few moments to think about the role played by scripture.

21:15 in your thinking about this question, who is God? so the next question is to think, well, what role has tradition played?

21:24 So, I'll give you, Two or three minutes to, to mull over this one. And just to say, in case you've forgotten to do this, this is the kind of thing that you just need to be jotting down in your notebook so that when you come together with the others, for the online or in-person gathering, then

21:44 we can share accordingly. Okay. Okay, so we've been thinking about how tradition, shapes, how we think, about who is God.

26:11 And so the next one we're going to think about is how we- the reason, shapes, are thinking about God.

26:18 And again, hold in your mind if you can as you do this, the different understandings of reason that you might be playing with, is it just isolated, independent, rational thinking, or is it something- something where that has, been swept up within the activity of God and is shaping your

26:45 thinking accordingly. Who is God? And one of the things that I hope that when we meet we'll be able to explore as to what degree is reason actually necessary for our ability to even be able to read scripture.

31:16 it's not as if our- I won't could argue that it's not as if our reading of scripture is just something that just- that scripture is on it's there on it's own.

31:24 It's just like, well we need to read scripture and- we need to use our- our- our reason, our critical faculties when we read scripture.

31:31 we need to use language, which is part of our- our rational faculties as well. So, yeah, to what degree these are interrelated, is, obviously

something that, I should imagine we'll be teasing out, when we- when we meet.

31:50 Okay, so the- fourth one to spend some time thinking about is experience. So again, different meanings of the word experience in a sense of just, well, this is what- this is my lived experience, or are we talking about experiences as in, experiences of God that we've- we've had, that shape  
32:07 our understanding of who God is. You can go in either or both directions, just- just jot down some things, and, uh- with this question, like, what- what part has, experience played when you come to answer the question, or the theoretically reflect on the question, who is God?

32:28 There we go, ok, so we've been thinking about experience and then the fifth one, which as I say is, mmmm, more frequently these days, but still not perhaps, one of the most traditional ways of thinking about these things, but it is important, so it's good to think about it.

37:09 so is, worship. So, yes, when you think about who God is, who is God, what part is played by worship in shaping what you think?

37:22 sources that we draw on, when we think, theologically, about this question, who is God?

42:05 now if we go back and just think about that cooking metaphor. I talked a moment ago about my learning how to cook when I was younger and being taught by my mother how to, cook an omelette at a very early age.

42:17 And, if you go on YouTube, yeah, and you search how to make an omelette, there are so many different ways to do this.

42:31 Or you just google how to make an omelette. lots of different ways. And, famous chefs, you know, Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson, whoever it may be.

42:42 And, and in our age, lots of people who don't have, perhaps a TV kind of chef profile, but are nevertheless garnering- honor.

42:50 And so you could have something which is, here I am, teaching you how to make an omelette. But there are so many different ways.

43:02 Do you use oil? Do you use butter? are you drawing the cooked egg into the middle of the pan?

43:09 Or are you just using a spatula just to let the egg run underneath type of thing? How do you fold it?

43:16 how much do you whisk the eggs? You know, different approaches. anyway, it's point being that you've got the same ingredients, but the way they combine the way that they use, sometimes you tweak different emphases within it, you end up with different types of omelette.

43:33 And more broadly, when you're cooking, you take all sorts of different types of food. types of, yeah.

43:40 But then you bring them together, all sorts of different ingredients, and you create different meals. so on the one hand, it's the same sources, but how they've been combined leads to a different result.

43:53 And that's exactly the same when it comes to theology. We have our same sources. We have scripture, tradition, reason. And also experience and worship, too.

44:05 and, and, and there are others that we can talk about. but those are, those, especially scripture reason, tradition, reason, and experience.

44:14 Those are the sort of the core ones. How we bring those into conversation with each other. even when we say that scripture is preeminent, is our first and foremost authority.

44:25 and, How we then bring tradition and reason into conversation with, scripture. And our experiences, whatever kind of experiences we're talking about, just everyday experiences or god illuminated experiences and ditto reason and so on and so forth.

44:45 How we bring those together are going to shape how we do and think theology. And go right back to the beginning of this, sequence of session one.

44:56 It's not just about how we think theologically. It's how we live theologically. It's going to shape how we live. And one of the things to think about in our conversation.

45:04 So we're going to come together when we meet. And we're going to think about these sources and the different emphases that they've had for us in our lives.

45:11 As you listen to other people, think about them. Oh, they're really- They're really drawing on scripture here. Or they're really drawing on tradition.

45:19 Or they're really drawing on their lived experience. Or they're really drawing on an experience of the spirit. Or they're really drawing on their critical, rational kind of faculties.

45:28 The way they're thinking things through. All they're talking about something that happened in the church service and the way that they- the liturgy, they come up with a line that they say week by week.

45:38 And this- is really shaping how they think of God. Pay attention to all those things. In yourself, in your own thinking, and in others.

45:46 It helps us when we do this. to understand why we come at things with slightly different, and sometimes quite significantly different, conclusions as to, the- as we wrestle with these really, fundamental, the biggest questions.

46:02 We'll you in We'll see that we can have in our lives. and so, yeah. We're gonna talk a little bit more about this as we carry on, as you would expect, in a course called Exploring Theology.

46:13 But I just want to draw your attention to, this at that point. Okay, so, this video is slightly shorter.



46:19 This is where I'm gonna draw the second video to a close, and so, I'd let this sink in a bit, if I were you, rather- then just jump straight to the third video, where we're going to go into further detail and dig deeper, as it was, or go back to the swimming metaphor.

46:38 Start to swim a little bit out of the shallow end, when it comes to thinking about this question about who is God.

46:43 But I would, if I were you, I'd let, you know, a bit of time go by a day, or two, or something like that.

46:50 Just start- up to think, and you just, just let it sit in. Just let it sink in. Go, you know, remember that metaphor I used?

46:58 Well, not microwaving this. This is slow cooker. You know, let it, let it, let it, you know, bubble away, slowly.

47:04 Anyway, I hope you've enjoyed the material so far, and when you're ready, turn to video, three, for, this first session.

47:15 Well, we're looking at the question, who is God? Okay, see you soon. Bye now.