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CHOSEN SEMINARY

COLLEGE OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, RESEARCH & CHAPLAINCY

Formally Known As: Chosen Christian Theological Seminary

(AN AFFILIATE OF TRIUMPHANT CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA & LPMV

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COURSE: FOUNDATION OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY - BTP101

COURSE OUTLINE

MODULE 1: WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED PRACTICAL THEOLOGY?
MODULE 2: THE HEARTBEAT: HOW TO DO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY
MODULE 3: WHERE DO WE GET OUR LIGHT FROM? SOURCES FOR REFLECTION
MODULE 4: UNDERSTANDING YOUR GROUND: CONTEXT IS KING!
MODULE 5: WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD: MAJOR AREAS OF WORK
MODULE 6: THE FIGHT AND THE FUTURE: CRITIQUES AND NEW DIRECTIONS
ASSESSMENT: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: YOUR FINAL PROJECT

THIS IS THE OFFICIAL HANDOUT PRODUCE BY CHOSEN SEMINARY

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This Copy of Handout belongs to:

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FOUNDATION OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Welcome to this journey! This is not just another course. This is a journey into how our faith meets the hard, real ground of our everyday life. We are talking about how the Gospel moves from the pages of the Bible to the streets of Ado-Ekiti, to the villages in Enugu, to the politics of Abuja, and to the pain and joy in our own hearts.

Why This Course?

Because too many times, people think theology is only for professors in big universities. They say, "Theory is for school, real life is different." But that is a big mistake! True theology is not complete until it rolls up its sleeves and gets to work. That is what Practical Theology is all about. It asks the burning question: "**SO WHAT?"** After all the Bible study and doctrine, SO WHAT must we DO? How must we LIVE?

This handout is your map for this journey. It is written in our own language, with our Nigerian context in mind. Let's dive in!

MODULE 1: WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED PRACTICAL THEOLOGY?

1.1 Forget the Old Ideas!

Many of us think "Practical Theology" means learning the skills of a pastor: how to preach, how to pray for the sick, how to run a church. That is part of it, but that is just the beginning! That is like calling a mechanic an engineer. A mechanic follows a manual. An engineer understands how everything works and can even build a new car!

- ***Practical Theology is not just "Pastoral Tips and Tricks."***
- ***It is the ENGINEERING of faithful action.***

1.2 A Powerful History: From "Chaplain's Handbook" to "World-Changing Tool"

Long time ago, it was called "Pastoral Theology." It was like a handbook for priests: how to give last rites, how to counsel. It was about applying the finished theology from the big professors.

Then, a man named **Friedrich Schleiermacher** stood up! He said, "No! Practical Theology is not a small boy waiting for leftovers from Systematic Theology. It is a full member of the family!" He gave it a seat at the table of serious theological disciplines.

The Big Shift:

- **OLD VIEW:** Theory (Bible, Doctrine) → APPLIED TO → Practice (Ministry).
- **NEW VIEW:** Practice and Theory are in CONSTANT DIALOGUE. Our real-life struggles actually SHAPE and CHANGE our theology! Our Nigerian struggle with corruption, for example, must shape how we understand God's justice.

1.3 So, Let's Define It!

Practical Theology is the critical, Spirit-led work of bringing our everyday life, our culture, and our deepest struggles into a living conversation with God's Word and God's mission in the world. It starts with the REAL and asks, "What is God saying and doing HERE, and what must we do about it?"

Key Question for You: Look at your church or community. Is faith just a Sunday theory, or does it roll up its sleeves on Monday?

MODULE 2: THE HEARTBEAT: HOW TO DO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

You don't just jump and shout "God said!" There is a process. A cycle. A heartbeat. This heartbeat has four strong beats.

- **Beat 1: SEE! (Open Your Eyes Wide)**

This is where many of us fail. We talk without looking. STOP! Look at the real situation.

· **What is happening?** In your family, what is the silent pain? In your church, why are the youth leaving? In Nigeria, what is the cry of the poor?

· **Describe it like a news reporter.** Don't judge yet. Just see. Feel it. Listen to the stories. This is called "***Concrete Experience.***"

Example: Don't just say "The youth are wayward." SEE: "95% of our church youth are unemployed. They spend 10 hours a day on social media comparing themselves to celebrities. They feel the church is judging them, not helping them."

- **Beat 2: JUDGE! (Use Your Mind and God's Word)**

Now, analyze what you see. This is a double judgment:

· **A. Social/Cultural Judgment:** Why is this happening? Use the tools of wisdom. Is it the bad economy? Is it a parenting problem? Is it a global trend? Ask: "Who has power here? Who is suffering?"

· **B. Theological Judgment:** Now bring in the BIG LIGHT – God's Word. What does the Bible say about justice, hope, community, idolatry? What has the Church taught through history? This is not for finding a single "proof verse." It is for letting God's story interrogate our story.

Example: On the youth issue: Socially, it's an economic and identity crisis. Theologically, it touches on idolatry (worship of money/fame), God's provision, and the church's call to be a family.

- **Beat 3: ACT! (Plan Your Move in Faith)**

This is not about random action. It is **faithful, strategic response**. Based on what you saw and judged, what will you DO?

· **Brainstorm actions.** Will you start a skills acquisition workshop? A mentorship program? A Bible study that talks real about money and purpose?

· **Plan it**. Who will do it? When? With what resources?

Example: Action Plan: "Start 'The Jeremiah Project': A weekly gathering combining basic coding lessons with a discussion on biblical purpose and identity."

- **Beat 4: LEARN & REPEAT! (The Cycle Never Stops)**

After you act, you go back to **SEEING**! What happened? Did it work? What new things did you learn? This turns action into **PRAXIS** – action that is followed by reflection, which leads to wiser action. The heartbeat continues: **SEE – JUDGE – ACT – LEARN – SEE AGAIN...**

This cycle is your MOST POWERFUL TOOL. It turns you from a blind follower into a wise, discerning practitioner of faith.

Your Task: Take a small problem in your life. Follow these four beats. Write down one point for each beat.

MODULE 3: WHERE DO WE GET OUR LIGHT FROM? SOURCES FOR REFLECTION

When we are in that **JUDGE** stage, where do we look for answers? We are not empty-headed. God has given us lamps to light our path. Think of it as a Four-Lamp Stand.

- **Lamp 1: SCRIPTURE (The Powerful, Central Light)**

The Bible is our primary light. But caution! We are not talking about "proof-texting" – grabbing one verse to support your already-made decision. That is manipulation!

· We must listen to the ***whole story*** of Scripture. What is God's mission? What is the heart of the Law and the Gospel?

· **Ask:** How does the story of the Exodus speak to oppression in Nigeria? How does Jesus' treatment of the Samaritan woman guide us on tribalism?

- **Lamp 2: TRADITION (The Long, Faithful Light)**

This is the wisdom of the saints who have walked this path before us. What did Augustine say about human nature? What did the early church do about persecution? What hymns and prayers have sustained our Nigerian fathers and mothers through war and famine?

· Tradition is a stream we swim in. It stops us from inventing foolish new heresies every day.

· But we must also **critique tradition**. Some traditions (like silencing women) may be culture, not gospel!

- **Lamp 3: REASON (The God-Given Mind Light)**

God gave us a brain! Use it! This includes logic, science, psychology, sociology.

· If your child is sick, you pray (Scripture/Tradition) AND you take them to a doctor (Reason).

· To solve community conflict, you pray AND you use principles of conflict resolution.

Lamp 4: EXPERIENCE (The Hot, Personal Light)

This is your life! The experience of the Holy Spirit's peace. The experience of suffering. The experience of joy in worship. The experience of being a Nigerian in the 21st century.

· **Our experience is a valid source, but not the ONLY source.** It must be tested by the other three lamps. A feeling is not always God's voice.

The Four Together: These four lamps must shine on each other. If your "experience" or "reason" says something that clearly breaks the central light of Scripture, be very careful! The goal is a **conversation** among them, led by the Holy Spirit.

MODULE 4: UNDERSTANDING YOUR GROUND: CONTEXT IS KING!

Listen! A coconut tree cannot grow in the desert of Sokoto. And a sermon preached in a wealthy Ikoyi church may sound like nonsense in a Makoko waterfront community. **CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING.**

4.1 What is Context?

It is the soil where you are planted. It includes:

· **Culture:** Our languages, our respect for elders, our love for celebration.

· **Social & Economic Reality:** Poverty, corruption, the "Big Man" syndrome, unemployment.

· **Politics:** Power, oppression, the legacy of colonialism.

· **History:** The memory of the Civil War, the impact of missionary work.

To ignore context is to preach a ghost gospel that touches nobody.

4.2 How to Analyze Your Context: Become a Loving Spy.

You need to study your community like an anthropologist.

· **Observe:** Go and sit in the village square. Listen to the gossip at the borehole. What do people worry about? What makes them celebrate?

· **Ask Questions:** "Madam, what is the hardest thing about raising children now?" "Sir, what does success mean to you?"

· **Thick Description:** Don't just say "They are poor." Describe: "The father is a okada rider with an old knee injury. The mother sells peeled oranges by the road. Their two children share one textbook. Yet, they always come to church in clean, pressed clothes." See the dignity inside the struggle.

4.3 The Prophetic Voice: Context is not God.

Understanding context doesn't mean surrendering to it. After you understand, you must ask the **prophetic question: "Which parts of our context reflect God's kingdom? And which parts are against it?"**

· Our culture's respect for elders is **good**.

· Our culture's tribalism and nepotism is **evil** and must be challenged by the gospel.

· Practical Theology is not a slave to culture. It is a prophet to culture.

Assignment: Write a "Thick Description" of one aspect of your own community.

MODULE 5: WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD: MAJOR AREAS OF WORK

Practical Theology is like a big tree with many branches. Here are the main branches where this work happens:

- **Branch 1: PREACHING (Homiletics)**

This is not just about shouting and speaking grammar. It is **theology coming through a human personality to a specific people at a specific time**.

· Key Question: How does the ancient text connect with this congregation's Monday morning reality?

· Nigerian Flavour: Our love for story, proverbs, and dramatic delivery is a GIFT! But it must serve the message, not drown it.

- **Branch 2: WORSHIP (Liturgy)**

How do we pray, sing, and celebrate together? Is our worship just a dry routine or a life-giving encounter with God?

· Key Question: Do our songs and prayers reflect only joy, or also our laments for suffering? Can a mother who lost her child to kidnapping find her pain in our worship?

· Nigerian Flavour: Our energetic praise is powerful. But we need to create space for holy silence and tears too.

- **Branch 3: CARE (Pastoral Counseling)**

Walking with people in pain. This is not giving quick "God will do it" slogans. It is being the hands of Jesus that touch the wounded.

· Key Question: How do we offer God's love to someone with depression, HIV, or deep family shame?

· Nigerian Challenge: We must break the stigma around mental health. "Thinking too much" is sometimes a sickness that needs therapy and prayer.

- **Branch 4: TEACHING (Christian Education)**

Passing on the faith to the next generation. It's more than memorizing Bible verses.

· **Key Question:** Are we teaching our youth to pass exams on doctrine, or are we forming them to be disciples who can withstand the pressures of university life and corruption?

· **Nigerian Need:** We need curriculum that tackles real issues: sexuality, integrity in business, civic responsibility.

- **Branch 5: LEADERSHIP (Church Administration)**

This is spiritual work! Managing people, money, and vision. Is the church run like a corrupt Nigerian ministry, or like the servant-hearted family of God?

· **Key Question:** Does our church leadership reflect Christ's servant leadership, or the world's "Big Man" leadership?

· **A Burning Issue: FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY**. Practical Theology demands it!

- **Branch 6: MISSION (Public Engagement)**

Taking faith beyond the church walls. This is about Sharia Law in the North, Environmental pollution in the Niger Delta, Bad governance.

· **Key Question:** What does the Gospel have to say to the politician, the market woman, the policeman collecting bribes?

· **Our Call:** The church must be the conscience of the nation, not its cheerleader.

All these branches are connected. Bad leadership affects worship. Weak teaching affects mission. It is one tree.

MODULE 6: THE FIGHT AND THE FUTURE: CRITIQUES AND NEW DIRECTIONS

No discipline is perfect. Let's be honest about the fights inside the family and see where the wind of the Spirit is blowing.

6.1 Common Attacks on Practical Theology

1. "It's Too Soft! Just Sociology in a Jumper." Critics say it abandons Bible truth for social science. Our Response: It uses social science to understand the problem, but uses theology to find the solution.

2. "It Makes the Culture the Boss." That it changes doctrine to please people. Our Response: True PT confronts culture with the Gospel! It listens to culture to know how to speak, not what to say.

3. "It's Only for Church Activities." That it's too inward-looking. This is a valid punch! We must break out of the church building.

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6.2 The Exciting New Directions (Where the Action is Now!)

The Spirit is pushing the boundaries! Check these new frontiers:

- **Interfaith Practical Theology:** In a Nigeria of Muslims and Christians, how do we witness with love and not violence? How do we work together for peace?
- **Public Theology:** How does faith speak to NEPA (electricity), Police Brutality, Fuel Subsidy? This is the big, urgent one for Nigeria!
- **Digital Theology:** The internet and social media are now a key "context." What is the theology of the virtual space? How do we do ministry online without spreading hate and fake news?
- **Theology of the Body & Arts:** Using drama, music, dance, and sport to express and teach faith. Our Nigerian creativity is a goldmine here!
- **Eco-Theology:** God called creation "good." What does the Gospel say to the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta? This is a justice issue.

The future of Practical Theology is not in a dusty library. It is on the noisy, messy, painful, and glorious streets of our nations.

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: YOUR FINAL PROJECT

Your final task is not to write a big, boring essay that nobody will read. It is to DO something with all you have learned.

The Task: Create an "Action Plan for Faithful Praxis"

Choose ONE real issue from your own context. Then, using the Four-Beat Cycle and all the lamps and tools, create a practical plan to address it.

Format for Your 5-Page Project Report:

1. **TITLE PAGE**

· A catchy, meaningful title for your project.

· Your name and the date.

2. **PART 1: THE "SEE" – Thick Description (1 page)**

· What is the painful or hopeful situation? Describe it like a movie scene. Use stories, facts, observations. Make us feel it.

3. **PART 2: THE "JUDGE" – Double Analysis (1.5 pages)**

· A. Social/Cultural Analysis: Why is this happening? Use simple social reasoning. Who benefits? Who suffers?

· B. Theological Reflection: What do the Four Lamps say?

· Scripture: What key biblical themes or stories speak to this?

· Tradition: Any wisdom from church history or our Nigerian Christian heritage?

· Reason: What common sense, science, or data is relevant?

· Experience: What have you or others personally experienced here?

4. **PART 3: THE "ACT" – Your Faithful Response Plan (1.5 pages)**

· What specific, practical action are you proposing? (e.g., a 3-month mentorship program, a new church committee, a community dialogue event).

· Details: Who will do it? What are the steps? What resources are needed? What is the timeline?

5. **PART 4: REFLECTION & CONCLUSION (1 page)**

· How did this process change YOUR understanding of the problem?

· What was the hardest part? The most surprising?

· What is your final prayer for this situation?

Project Ideas to Spark Your Thinking:

· **Topic:** Spiritual Pollution in My Community (Witchcraft Accusations).

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· **Action Plan:** Propose a preaching/teaching series on the power of Christ, combined with training for church leaders on pastoral care for the accused.

· **Topic:** Helping Church Members Integrate Faith and Daily Work.

· **Action Plan:** Create a "Monday Ministry" small group curriculum for traders, civil servants, and students.

· **Topic:** Church Response to Local Environmental Waste.

· **Action Plan:** Organize a "Church Clean & Green" monthly sanitation drive and biblical teaching on stewardship.

Remember: The goal is not a perfect, world-changing plan. The goal is to show you can think theologically about practice. Show your working! Let us see the sweat of your reflection.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY MANIFESTO

Let us end with a bold declaration. As those learning this discipline in the Nigerian context, we say:

1. We Reject a Gospel that is only for Sundays. We demand a faith that works from Monday to Saturday, in the market, the office, and the voting booth.

2. We Reject Theology that flees from suffering. We will dive into the pain of our people with the hope of the Resurrection.

3. We Reject Preaching that shouts but does not think. We will preach messages that are deeply biblical and sharply relevant.

4. We Reject Church Practice that copies the world's corruption. We will build communities of transparency, justice, and servant leadership.

5. We Embrace our Culture as a Gift to be purified. We will use our stories, our proverbs, our music, and our resilient joy to glorify God.

6. We Commit to being Students of our Context. We will listen before we speak, love before we judge, and act in faith, not in fear.

This is our call. This is Practical Theology. This is faith getting its hands dirty for the sake of God's Kingdom in Nigeria.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS (In Simple English)

· **Context:** The specific place, culture, time, and people you are dealing with. Your "ground."

· **Praxis:** The powerful cycle of action and reflection. Wise action that leads to learning, which leads to wiser action.

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· **Theological Reflection:** The process of thinking deeply about a situation in the light of God (Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience).

· **Hermeneutics:** The science and art of interpretation. How we understand the Bible and our life.

· **Pastoral Cycle:** Another name for the SEE-JUDGE-ACT-LEARN method.

· **Systematic Theology:** The discipline that organizes Christian doctrines (like the Trinity, Salvation) in a logical, full system.

· **Empirical:** Based on observation, experience, or data, not just theory.

· **Prophetic Critique:** Challenging any part of society (including the church!) that goes against God's justice and love.

· **Missiology:** The study of God's mission and how the church joins in it.

· **Formation:** The process of shaping people into the character of Christ. Discipleship.

SIMPLE SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

After each module, ask yourself:

Module 1: Can I explain Practical Theology to a church member in two sentences?

Module 2: Can I list the four beats of the cycle without looking?

Module 3: When faced with a problem, do I naturally ask, "What might the Bible, tradition, reason, and experience say about this?"

Module 4: Do I now look at my community with more curious, observing eyes?

Module 5: Can I name 3 areas of Practical Theology and their main questions?

Module 6: Can I identify one new direction in PT that excites me for Nigeria?

Overall: Has this course moved faith from being a noun (a thing I have) to being a verb (a thing I DO in the world)?

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