# WHERE DOES THEOLOGY COME FROM?

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Our understanding of the world should evolve and increase as we engage with people and cultures different to ourselves. This means we should gain a wider understanding of Scripture and have some of our long-held certainties challenged.
**Category:** Observations

I love this short quote from Scott McKnight's book Reading Romans Backwards:

> *The lived theology of Romans emerges out of Paul's two decades of gentile mission, much of it hard-fought and some of it learned in prisons along the way or explained on the run. Everything Paul writes comes from that mission, not from a library, and what Paul has learned out of that lifetime of gentile mission experience comes to the surface in Romans.*
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> *Reading Romans Backwards xv*

I might be tempted to quibble a little; I think Paul's theology did have roots in a library, or at least in the rabbinical school where he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. But all that Paul learned as a devout Pharisee was thrown up in the air and came down in a different alignment as a result of his mission.

The struggle in Romans comes from Paul having to align his great knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures with what he saw God doing among the Gentiles. He was forced to reframe and rethink so many of the things that he was certain about.

Can I suggest that we need to adopt that sort of approach as we are involved in mission? It's not that the Bible changes, our understanding of the world should evolve and increase as we engage with people and cultures different to ourselves. This means we should gain a wider understanding of Scripture and have some of our long-held certainties challenged.

If you can spend significant time with people from a different language and culture than your own, and not start to question some of your theological assumptions, you are probably not listening either to your new friends or to the Bible.