

Theology 101



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Introduction

“Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.” —EPHESIANS 4:14–15, NLT



Definitions

The word *theology* is derived from two Greek words:

- * *Theos* (God)
- * *Logos* (speech or reason)

Therefore, theology in its simplest terms is rational discussion about God.

In Greek, the word *theologia* referred to discussions amongst the philosophers about divine matters. Plato called the stories of the gods “theologies.” Aristotle considered theology to be the greatest of all scientific studies since its subject, God, was the highest reality. Mark Batterson would echo Aristotle’s thoughts in his claim that every “-ology” is a branch of theology.

B. B. Warfield promoted a classic definition as follows: “Theology is the science of God and his relationship to man and the world.” In greater detail, it is the discipline which 1) presents a unified formulation of truth concerning God and his relationship to humanity and the universe as this is set forth in divine revelation; and 2) applies such truths to the entire range of human thought and life. (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*)

Theology: the contents of the Christian faith as set forth in orderly exposition by the Christian community. (*Renewal Theology*, J. Rodman Williams)

Theology: the attempt to reduce religious truth to an organized system. (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*)

Systematic theology: any study that answers the question, “What does the whole Bible teach us today?” This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and



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understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic. (*Bible Doctrine*, Wayne Grudem)

Doctrine: What the whole Bible teaches about some particular topic. (*Bible Doctrine*, Wayne Grudem)

Major Doctrine: one that has a significant impact on our thinking about other doctrines or that has a significant impact on how we live the Christian life (examples: authority of the Bible, deity of Christ, justification by faith).

Minor Doctrine: one that has very little impact on how we think about other doctrines and very little impact on how we live the Christian life (examples: differing views of the future, forms of church government, forms of communion and baptism).

Paradox: a seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true (example: the doctrine of the Trinity).

Other Disciplines

Biblical Theology: historical development of theology throughout Scripture.

Historical Theology: study of Christian doctrines as they have been considered at different points in church history.

Philosophical Theology: a study of theological topics largely without the use of the Bible. Instead, philosophical tools, resources, and methods are used to organize theological thought (example: Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology*).

Narrative Theology: a 20th-century development of theological thought predicated on the idea that the Bible should be considered as narrative more than a system of theological truth.

Dogmatic Theology: a study of theology as set forth in the creeds, dogmas, and pronouncements of the church.

Apologetics: a defense of the Christian faith for the purpose of instructing believers or convincing unbelievers.

Ethics: the application of God's Word to real life situations, problems, and questions.



Three Sources of Authority

- * Biblical
- * Traditionalist
- * Subjectivist

Initial Presuppositions

Presupposition: an assumption that forms the beginning point of any study.

- * The Bible is true and is the absolute standard of truth.
- * The God of the Bible exists, and he is who the Bible says he is.

Why Study Theology?

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Ephesians 4:11–16)

“Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:13–14)

- * Clarification (Ephesians 4:14)
- * Correction (1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 4:3–5; Hebrews 5:13–14)
- * Declaration and Unification (Ephesians 4:13)
- * Obedience (Psalm 119:11; Matthew 28:19–20; 1 John 2:3)
- * Growth (Ephesians 4)
- * To love and glorify God (Matthew 22:37; Philippians 1:9–11)

How Should We Study Theology?



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- * Biblically (2 Timothy 3:16–17)
- * Guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:17; 16:13)
- * Humbly (2 Timothy 2:23–25; 1 Peter 5:5; James 1:19–20)
- * With discernment (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:17–19)
- * In community (Proverbs 11:14; 1 Corinthians 12:27–28)
- * Prayerfully (Psalm 119:18)
- * With application to life (1 Timothy 6:3; Titus 2:1)
- * With reference to church history (context and perspective)
- * With worship and praise (Deuteronomy 6:1–9; Psalm 119:14, 103, 111, 162)

The theology books that are quoted throughout this study are:

* **Bible Doctrine**, Wayne Grudem, Zondervan (July 1, 1999). *Bible Doctrine* takes a highly commended upper-level textbook on systematic theology and makes it accessible to the average reader. Abridged from Wayne Grudem’s award-winning *Systematic Theology*, *Bible Doctrine* covers the same essentials of the faith, giving you a firm grasp on seven key topics.

* **Theology for the Community of God**, Stanley Grenz, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2000). Stanley Grenz presents the traditional themes of Christian doctrine within an emphasis on God’s central program for creation, namely, the establishment of community. Masterfully blending biblical, historical, and contemporary concerns, Grenz’s respected work provides a coherent vision of the faith that is both intellectually satisfying and expressible in Christian living.

* **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Baker Academic; 2nd edition (2001). “EDT is a work of responsible evangelical scholarship, judicious, and generally fair to all sides. It has no ax to grind, though it does have a position to present. And happily, this it does with an acceptable confidence.”—CHRISTIANITY TODAY.

* **Systematic Theology: a Pentecostal Perspective**, Stanley M. Horton, Logion Press (1994). If you are looking for a theology book that tells what the Assemblies of God believes, then consider getting this book.



The Doctrine of the Bible

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Doctrine of the Bible

The Bible is the inspired Word of God.

The Bible is God's word to us. The Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God, the only written revelation from God to man. The Bible is infallible and the authoritative rule of faith and conduct for mankind (2 Timothy 3:15–17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21).¹



Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church.

¹ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



The Doctrine of the Bible

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: Provide each person with the *Participant's Guide*, included at the end of this study.

Wayne Grudem says in his book *Bible Doctrine*, “The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”

We accept the authority of the Old Testament because:

- * The religion of ancient Israel was founded upon the written words of the Old Testament.
- * The concept of written revelation may have derived from God’s inscribing of the Ten Commandments.
- * Hundreds of Old Testament writings begin with “Thus says the Lord” (examples: Exodus 4:22; Joshua 24:2; 1 Samuel 10:18; Isaiah 10:24).
- * Old Testament writings often indicate that God spoke through prophets (Jeremiah 37:2; Zechariah 7:7).
- * Jesus viewed the Old Testament Scriptures as authoritative (Luke 24:25; John 5:45–47).
- * 2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. (The word *Scripture* comes from the Greek word *graphe*, which occurs in the New Testament 51 times. In each instance, it refers to the Old Testament writings.)

We accept the authority of the New Testament because:

- * 1 Timothy 5:18: For the Scripture says, (a) “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and (b) “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

(a) is from Deuteronomy 25:4; (b) is from Luke 10:7. Both are referred to as “Scripture.”
- * 2 Peter 3:15–16: And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Peter speaks of Scripture and Paul’s letters, showing a willingness to classify Paul’s letters as Scripture.



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* 1 Corinthians 14:37: “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.”

This verse is evidence that some New Testament writers were aware that their own writings were the words of God. It seems that there was a general awareness that “additions” were being made to Scripture during the writing of the New Testament. See also 2 Peter 3:2 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] Do you accept the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God? Why or why not?

[Q] What questions do you have about the reliability of Scripture?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Holy Spirit convinces us that Scripture is authoritative.

The Westminster Confession of Faith includes the following:

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from **the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts** (bold mine).

[Q] If you can, give an example of when you’ve been persuaded by the Holy Spirit that a Scripture passage is true.

[Q] Do you think the above statement is a circular argument? Why or why not?

Teaching Point Two: The authority of the Bible can be summed up by three “in” words.



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The first of these “in” words is inspired.

[Q] How would you define the inspiration of Scripture—what do you think it means?

Inspiration refers to the fact that the words of Scripture are spoken by God (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*). *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* says that inspiration is a “supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon divinely chosen men in consequence of which their writings become trustworthy and authoritative.”

The word *inspired* comes from the Greek word *theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.” Read 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; and 2 Peter 1:21.

[Q] If Scripture is God-breathed, how do you think he communicated it to the writers?

[Q] How does knowing that Scripture is God-breathed affect that way you read the Bible? How does it affect the way you interpret what the Scriptures mean?

Hebrews 1:1 says, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.” So, what was the method?

- * God spoke directly to the writer (Rev. 2).
- * The author researched (Luke 1:1–3).
- * The Holy Spirit reminded the writer of events (John 14:26).

Leader's Note: There are other views. To research two of these, see the writings of Schleiermacher and Karl Barth.

The second “in” word is infallible.

The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology defines infallible this way: “As it is wholly trustworthy regarding its truth, so must it be wholly reliable regarding its facts. And because it is both, it is our divine authority in all things that pertain to life and godliness.”

Infallibility is “the idea that Scripture is not able to lead us astray in matters of faith and practice” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Jesus said, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). The word Jesus uses here is the noun *aletheia* and not the adjective *alethes* (“true”), meaning that God’s Word is not just true but the truth.

Read Proverbs 30:5.



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[Q] What would you say is the difference between Scripture being the truth rather than simply true?

[Q] How would you describe the difference between inspired and infallible? Why do we need both terms to help describe our view of Scripture?

The third “in” word is inerrant.

Inerrancy is “the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relates to doctrine or ethics or to the social, physical, or life sciences.” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*)

Wayne Grudem says, “Inerrancy is the idea that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact” (*Bible Doctrine*).

Inerrancy emphasizes truthfulness. Infallibility emphasizes trustworthiness. Read Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:18; and Titus 1:2.

[Q] Try to describe inerrancy in your own words.

Leader's Note: You may want to mention that others, who do not believe in inerrancy, may adopt points of view that include:

- **Pluralism**
- **Postmodernism**
- **Seeing the Bible as authoritative only for faith and practice (not as it relates to the social, physical, or life sciences)**
- **Considering inerrancy a poor term**
- **Believing there are no inerrant manuscripts, and there are some clear errors in the Bible**

Teaching Point Three: The characteristics of Scripture include clarity, necessity, and sufficiency.

1. Clarity

The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who read it seeking God's help and are willing to follow it. (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*)

Read Psalm 19:7; 119:130; and 1 Corinthians 2:14.



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The doctrine of clarity does not mean that all believers everywhere will agree in their interpretations of the teachings of Scripture (Acts 15:7; Galatians 2:11–15). However, the doctrine does tell us that the problem lies not with Scripture itself, but within ourselves.

The doctrine of clarity also affirms that the writings of Scripture will not be clear to those who are unwilling to receive them or obey them (1 Corinthians 1:18–25; James 1:5–6).

[Q] Why would the doctrine of clarity be important to our view of Scripture?

[Q] Can you remember a time when you encountered a Scripture passage that you understood, and that spoke directly to what you were experiencing at the time?

[Q] Can you remember a time when you encountered a Scripture passage that you did not understand? What did you do then, and what methods have you found now to help uncover the meaning of difficult texts?

[Q] If the doctrine of clarity is true, why do Christians come up with so many different interpretations?

Leader's Note: Questions to consider when faced with interpretation differences are:

- **Am I trying to make a statement on an issue where Scripture is silent?**
- **Have I made a mistake in interpretation?**
- **Is there a personal inadequacy (moral, sin, or personality issue) or a lack of prayerful study?**

2. Necessity

The necessity of the Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowledge of the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for certain knowledge of God's will, but it is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws. (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*)

Read Romans 10:13–17.

General Revelation vs. Special Revelation

* General Revelation is the knowledge of God from general observations of nature (Rom. 1:18–20) or from one's own conscience (Rom. 2:14).

[Q] Give an example of how God has revealed himself to you via General Revelation.



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* Special Revelation is God's words addressed to a specific people (Scripture).

The tension can be found in passages such as John 14:6 and Hebrews 11:6.

[Q] Give an example of how God has revealed himself to you via Special Revelation.

Leader's Note: You may want to note that there are other views, which include:

- **Inclusivism**— it is possible to be saved through Christ's work if one is sincerely following the religion one knows.
- **Universalism**— God will eventually save everyone.

3. Sufficiency

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, trusting him perfectly, and obeying him perfectly. (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*)

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and Psalm 119:9.

[Q] What might this tell us about the things God is silent about in Scripture?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

There are four ways to learn the Scriptures:

- * **Reading**— devotional reading allows us to grasp the big picture of the biblical story by reading large chunks of Scripture in one sitting.
- * **Study**— the systematic dissection of Scripture through a process of observation, interpretation, and application.
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- * **Memorization**— enables the Word to become a living and active part of our lives, and we grow closer to God as we internalize his truth.



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Action Point: Read and meditate on Psalm 119 each day this week. Ask: What does this chapter say about the authority, inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency of Scripture?



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Participant's Guide

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The Doctrine of the Bible

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2. Necessity

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General Revelation vs. Special Revelation

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- * **Memorization**— enables the Word to become a living and active part of our lives, and we grow closer to God as we internalize his truth.

Action Point: Read and meditate on Psalm 119 each day this week. Ask: What does this chapter say about the authority, inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency of Scripture?



The Doctrine of God

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Doctrine of God

There is one true God.

God is called by many different names because of the different dimensions of his personality, but God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is super-dimensional and eternally self-existent (John 8:54–59). God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1–2). While God is one, he has revealed himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).¹



Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4; Genesis 1–2; Matthew 28:19

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church

¹ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



The Doctrine of God

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.

Does God exist? From the Middle Ages and into the Enlightenment, Christian thinkers developed three basic types of theistic proofs:

- * **Ontological Argument**— the idea that God must exist; his nonexistence is inconceivable. Man cannot consider the finite without at the same time thinking of the infinite, which bounds and determines the finite. Devised by Anselm.²
- * **Cosmological and Teleological Argument**— God must exist as the cause of the world or as the cause of what we observe in the natural world. Thomas Aquinas used this argument in *Summa Theologica*.
- * **Moral Argument**— the practices of all social communities reveal a universal code of morality. Immanuel Kant was the first major philosopher to use the moral argument. The moral argument has been popularized in modern times by C. S. Lewis.

Discussion Questions:

- [Q] Which of the three theistic proofs do you find most convincing? Why?
- [Q] If you have ever tried to convince someone of the existence of God, what kind of argument did you use? Was it effective?
- [Q] Read Romans 1:19–20. What light does this passage throw on the subject?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The doctrine of the Trinity helps us understand God.

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

² Georg Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Mind*; Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*.



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“The concept of tri-unity lies at the heart of the Christian understanding of God and therefore is necessary in order to maintain the central message of the Bible.”³

“Trinity: The term designating one God in three persons. Although not itself a Biblical term, ‘the Trinity’ has found a convenient designation for the one God self-revealed in Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It signifies that within the one essence of the Godhead we have to distinguish three ‘persons’ who are neither three gods on one side, not three parts or modes of God on the other, but coequally and coeternally God.”⁴

The concept of the Trinity is not clearly spelled out in Scripture. However, this truth is revealed in various parts of Scripture. The following passages illustrate the Trinity:

- * Creation—read Genesis 1:2, 26 and John 1:3.
- * Birth of Jesus—read Luke 1:35.
- * Baptism of Jesus—read Matthew 3:16–17 (see also Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:32–34).
- * Great Commission—read Matthew 28:19.
- * Paul’s Blessing—read 2 Corinthians 13:14.
- * Salvation—read John 14:26 and Ephesians 1:13–14.
- * Book of Jude—read Jude 20–21.

What is the content of the doctrine of the Trinity?

- * God is one—Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Romans 3:30; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17.
- * God is three—John 1:1–4; 20:28; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; 12:4–6 (Holy Spirit is God); Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8 (Jesus is God).
- * God is a diversity—Matthew 11:27; John 14:26; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 1:2.
- * God is a unity—John 17:22–23.

The early church affirmed the truth of the Trinity. The First Ecumenical Council of Nicea confirmed the deity of Christ in 325 AD. The Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople agreed on the deity of the Holy Spirit in 381 AD.

³ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p. 54.

⁴ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 112.



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[Q] Why is the Trinity so essential to our understanding of who God is?

[Q] What happens to our view of God if we do not accept the Trinity?

There are at least three Trinitarian heresies:

- * **Tritheism**—there is not one God. God is three persons and each person is fully God.
- * **Modalism**—God is one person who appears to us in three different forms or “modes.”
- * **Arianism**—Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not eternally and fully God.

[Q] What makes these three heresies unacceptable according to Scripture? Explain how each one varies from what the Bible teaches.

Teaching Point Two: We cannot understand who God is without understanding his attributes.

A. W. Tozer said, “What comes to mind when you think of God is the most important thing about you.”

The characteristics of God are sometimes divided into two categories: incommunicable attributes and communicable attributes.

Incommunicable attributes are aspects of God’s character that he less fully shares with us. ⁵ These can include self-existence, immutability, infinity, and unity. ⁶

Communicable attributes are aspects of God’s character that he more fully shares or “communicates” with us. ⁷ These arise out of God’s spiritual, intellectual, and moral nature and include knowledge, wisdom, truthfulness, goodness, holiness, righteousness, and sovereignty. ⁸

We can also divide the attributes into categories of eternity and goodness.

Attribute of eternity:

“God is present in all time, and therefore all time is present to God.” (Grenz)

“God, being eternal, has no beginning or end or succession of events in his own being.” (Grudem)

⁵ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 486.

⁶ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p.90.

⁷ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 481.

⁸ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, pp.90-91.



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“God is the one and only reality that is without beginning, middle, or end.” (Williams)

Read Psalm 90:2; 102:27; Isaiah 57:15; 1 Timothy 1:17.

Attribute of independence:

“God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything.” (Grudem)

Read John 5:26 and Acts 17:24–25.

Attribute of being infinite:

“God is unlimited, unbounded. There is no confinement, no limitation. He transcends everything in his creation.” (Williams)

Read Genesis 14:18–22; 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 145:3; Nehemiah 9:5; Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 2:10–12.

Attribute of being unchangeable:

God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations. Also called immutability.⁹ There is dependability, constancy, and stability in all that he is and does.¹⁰

Read Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17.

Attribute of being spiritual:

“God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.” (Grudem)

“The Bible doesn't give us a definition of “spirit,” but it does give us descriptions—immortal, invisible, eternal.” (Horton)

Read John 4:24.

Attribute of being invisible:

“God's total essence, all of his spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows himself to us through visible, created things.” (Grudem)

Read Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Timothy 6:16.

⁹ Grudem, and Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p.58.

¹⁰ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, pp.90-91



The Doctrine of God

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Attribute of being omnipresent:

“God does not have size or spatial dimensions, and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.” (Grudem)

“All things are present to God in of themselves, whether they be events past, present, or future.” (Grenz)

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“God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.” (Grudem)

“The divine mind perceives the entire temporal sequence—all events—simultaneously in one act of cognition.” (Grenz)

Read Job 37:16 and 1 John 3:20.

Attribute of Omnipotence:

“God is able to do all his holy will.” (Grudem)

“The word “Almighty” (*el saddy*) occurs in the Old Testament 48 times; thirty-one of those times are in the book of Job.” (Williams)

“Omnipotence is God’s ability to bring completion to his design for creation.” (Grenz)

Read Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Ephesians 3:20.

Attribute of Goodness:

“God is, by his very nature, inclined to act with great generosity toward his creation.”¹¹

* **Holy**—“God is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor.” (Grudem)

Read Exodus 3:5; Leviticus 11:44; Psalm 71:22; Isaiah 6:3; 43:3; Luke 4:34.

* **Moral Standard**—“Rather than being ruled by some moral concept, God is the standard by which we will be judged and we are to judge all human conduct.” (Grenz)

Read 1 Peter 1:16 and 1 John 3:16.

¹¹ Stanley Horton, *Systematic Theology*, p. 127.



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* **Knowable**—“Humanity will never be able to fully comprehend God. However, he has shown himself at different times and in various ways, indicating that it is his will for us to know him and to be in right relationship with him.” (Horton)

“He wills to be known by personal names, he shows himself to be the one who enters into personal relationships with man, he is revealed uniquely in the person of Jesus Christ, and his character is deeply personal.” (Williams)

Read Psalm 46:10; Jeremiah 9:23–24; John 1:18; 17:3; Philippians 3:10; 1 John 2:13; 5:20.

* **Wise**—“God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals.” (Grudem)

The Hebraic understanding of wisdom was both intellectual and practical.

Read Job 9:4; Romans 8:28; 16:27; James 1:5.

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“God’s truthfulness means he also demonstrates complete integrity, dependability, and faithfulness.” (Williams)

Read Numbers 23:19; Psalm 141:6; Jeremiah 10:10; John 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 1:9.

* **Good**—“God is the final standard of good, and all God is and does is worthy of approval.” (Grudem)

Read Psalm 100:5; 106:1; Luke 18:19.

* **Love**—“God eternally gives of himself to others.” (Grudem)

“God is centrally the God of love. Love is the very essence of the divine nature.” (Williams)

Read John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:8.

* **Righteous and Just**—“These two terms are actually the same word in both Old Testament

Hebrew and New Testament Greek. God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.” (Grudem)

Read Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 25:8; 89:14; 97:2.

* **Jealous**—“God continually seeks to protect his own honor.” (Grudem)



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Read Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:24; Isaiah 48:11; Revelation 4:11.

* **Wrathful**—“God intensely hates all sin.” (Grudem)

Read Exodus 32:9–10; Deuteronomy 9:7–8; Romans 1:18; 3:25–26; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; Revelation 6:16–17.

[Q] As a group, walk through three or four of God's attributes and discuss how it relates to your daily life. For example, what difference does it make to your daily life that God is eternal, and so on.

Teaching Point Three: God first revealed himself to us as Creator (Genesis 1:1).

* **God created out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)**—Psalm 90:2; John 1:3; Colossians 1:17.

* **God created by speaking the world into existence**—Genesis 1; Psalm 33:6, 9; Hebrews 11:3.

* **God created Adam and Eve in a unique way**—Genesis 2:7, 21–23.

* **Jesus and the Holy Spirit played a role in the creation**—Genesis 1:2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16.

* **God is distinct from creation, but he is involved in creation and creation is dependent upon him**—Ephesians 4:6; Acts 17:25, 28.

* **God created the universe to show his glory**—Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 19; Revelation 4:11.

So what is the relationship between Scripture and the findings of modern science? There are several creation theories that seek to answer two basic questions regarding creation: 1) Age—how old is the earth? and 2) Method—how was the earth created?

* **Young Earth View**—the days in Genesis 1 are literal, successive 24-hour periods of time. Therefore, the world is no more than 10,000 years old.

* **Day-Age View**—the “days” in Genesis are best understood as indefinite periods of time.

* **Restoration View**—also called the “gap theory,” this theory argues that a large gap of time occurred between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. The original creation, therefore, may be very old, and the “days” of Genesis may be either literal 24-hour days or more indefinite ages.

* **Literary Framework View**—this theory proposes that a literal reading of the text as



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a chronological order of events is not the purpose of the text. Rather, the purpose of the creation account was to establish monotheism in a polytheistic context. The creation account is organized thematically, not chronologically.

* **Theistic Evolution**—God directed the evolutionary process to bring about all life forms on earth.

“While the various arguments for the two basic views of the age of the earth are complex and our conclusions are tentative, at this point in our understanding, Scripture seems to be more easily understood to suggest (but not to require) a young earth view, while the observable facts of creation seem increasingly to favor an old earth view.”¹²

A good overview of these theories can be found in the book *Across the Spectrum*.

[Q] Which creation theory do you lean toward and why?

[Q] Is this something you can agree to disagree on with those who hold to a different creation theory than you do? Why or why not?

[Q] How do you think we should talk about creation with those who aren't Christians?

Teaching point four: God is providential.

Preservation is an aspect of God's providence whereby he keeps all created things existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them. Read Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17.

Concurrence is an aspect of God's providence whereby he cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do. Read Ephesians 1:11; Psalm 148:8; Matthew 6:26; 10:29.

Government is an aspect of God's providence that indicates that God has purpose in all he does in the world and that he providentially governs or directs all things so they accomplish his purposes. Read Psalm 103:19; Romans 8:28; 11:36.

[Q] How do these three aspects of God's providence affect how you relate to him?

¹² Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 139.



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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Make a list of all the attributes of God we discussed in this lesson. In the weeks ahead, take an attribute each day and think about what difference that attribute makes in your life. Also, consider whether you hold any false ideas about God that contradict that attribute.



The Doctrine of God

Participant's Guide

Participant's Guide

The Doctrine of God

There is one true God.

God is called by many different names because of the different dimensions of his personality, but God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is super-dimensional and eternally self-existent (John 8:54–59). God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1–2). While God is one, he has revealed himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).¹



Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4; Genesis 1–2; Matthew 28:19

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church

¹ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Does God exist? From the Middle Ages and into the Enlightenment, Christian thinkers developed three basic types of theistic proofs:

- * **Ontological Argument**— the idea that God must exist; his nonexistence is inconceivable. Man cannot consider the finite without at the same time thinking of the infinite, which bounds and determines the finite. Devised by Anselm. ²
- * **Cosmological and Teleological Argument**— God must exist as the cause of the world or as the cause of what we observe in the natural world. Thomas Aquinas used this argument in *Summa Theologica*.
- * **Moral Argument**— the practices of all social communities reveal a universal code of morality. Immanuel Kant was the first major philosopher to use the moral argument. The moral argument has been popularized in modern times by C. S. Lewis.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The doctrine of the Trinity helps us understand God.

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

“The concept of tri-unity lies at the heart of the Christian understanding of God and therefore is necessary in order to maintain the central message of the Bible.” ³

“Trinity: The term designating one God in three persons. Although not itself a Biblical term, ‘the Trinity’ has found a convenient designation for the one God self-revealed in Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It signifies that within the one essence of the Godhead we have to distinguish three ‘persons’ who are neither three gods on one side, not three parts or modes of God on the other, but coequally and coeternally God.” ⁴

The concept of the Trinity is not clearly spelled out in Scripture. However, this truth is revealed in various parts of Scripture. The following passages illustrate the Trinity:

- * **Creation**—read Genesis 1:2, 26 and John 1:3.

² Georg Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Mind*; Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*.

³ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p. 54.

⁴ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 112.



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- * **Birth of Jesus**—read Luke 1:35.
- * **Baptism of Jesus**—read Matthew 3:16–17 (see also Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:32–34).
- * **Great Commission**—read Matthew 28:19.
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What is the content of the doctrine of the Trinity?

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- * **God is three**—John 1:1–4; 20:28; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; 12:4–6 (Holy Spirit is God); Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8 (Jesus is God).
- * **God is a diversity**—Matthew 11:27; John 14:26; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 1:2.
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The early church affirmed the truth of the Trinity. The First Ecumenical Council of Nicea confirmed the deity of Christ in 325 AD. The Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople agreed on the deity of the Holy Spirit in 381 AD.

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Teaching Point Two: We cannot understand who God is without understanding his attributes.

A. W. Tozer said, “What comes to mind when you think of God is the most important thing about you.”

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⁵ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 486.

⁶ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p.90.

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⁸ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, pp.90-91.



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“God is centrally the God of love. Love is the very essence of the divine nature.” (Williams)

Read John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:8.

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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Make a list of all the attributes of God we discussed in this lesson. In the weeks ahead, take an attribute each day and think about what difference that attribute makes in your life. Also, consider whether you hold any false ideas about God that contradict that attribute.



The Doctrine of Mankind

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

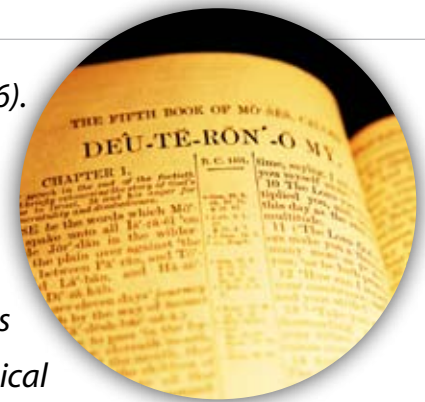
The Doctrine of Mankind

Adam and Eve sinned, affecting us all.

Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). However, by a voluntary act of will, Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6). That first sin had several repercussions. Man was excommunicated from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23), a curse was pronounced (Genesis 3:14–19), the process of physical death began (Genesis 2:17), and man died spiritually (Romans 5:12–19). Sin separated humankind from God (Ephesians 2:11–18) and left man in a fallen or sinful condition (Romans 3:23).¹

Scripture: Genesis 1:26; 2:17; 3:6, 14–19, 23; Romans 3:23; 5:12–19; Ephesians 2:11–18

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church.



¹ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



The Doctrine of Mankind

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.

“We may encapsulate our human identity as God’s creatures in three postulates: We are the good creation of God, we are marred through our fall to sin, but we are also the objects of God’s redemptive activity.”²

Read Genesis 1:26–31; 2:18–25.

Discussion Questions:

- [Q] How are we the good creation of God, even though we are marred by sin?
- [Q] What is your understanding of how God has taken care of our sin?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: We were created for God’s glory.

The first question in the Westminster Larger Catechism is, “What is the chief and highest end of man?” The answer is, “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and to fully enjoy him forever.”

Wayne Grudem says in *Bible Doctrine*, “When we realize that God created us to glorify him, and when we start to act in ways that fulfill that purpose, then we begin to experience an intensity of joy in the Lord that we have never before known.”

Read Isaiah 43:7 and 1 Corinthians 10:31.

- [Q] What do you think it means to glorify God in our daily lives?
- [Q] Do you enjoy God? Why or why not?
- [Q] If not, what do you think needs to change in order for you to do so?

Teaching Point Two: We were created in God’s image.

² Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p.125.



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We are created in the image and the likeness of God. Read Genesis 1:26–27.

Since we are created in God's image, we learn more about ourselves as we learn more about God.

[Q] What difference does knowing we were created in God's image make in the way you view yourself and others?

There are three views of what it means to be created in God's image:

The Substantival View: This view holds that the image of God is located in our essence or being—that humans alone stand above the rest of creation in the possession of an eternal soul. Within our soul lies our ability to reason, to communicate, to love, to sense God, and to make moral judgments. This view locates the divine image in what God has called us to be. Theological proponents of this view include St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin.

The Functional View: The image of God lies within our God-given authority. This view locates the image of the divine essence in what we are called to do. This view is reflected in Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8:4–6.

The Relational View: The image of God is our relationality. Martin Luther advocated this position. It is reflected in two places in the creation account: “let us make man in our image,” and “it is not good for the man to be alone.” Also read John 17:20–23.

[Q] What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of each of these views?

[Q] What ethical or moral implications are inherent in each?

Teaching Point Three: There are at least three views as to what makes up human nature.

The book *Across the Spectrum* summarizes the following views of what makes up human nature:

The Trichotomist View: The belief that the human self is composed of three distinct constitutive elements: body, soul, and spirit. This view had many advocates in the early church, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Didymus the Blind. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12.

The Dichotomist View: A view of the self that states that the human person is composed of two fundamental substances: body and soul. The dichotomist view dominated the early church after the Council of Constantinople in 381. Theologians that have embraced this view include John Calvin, Charles Hodge, and A. H. Strong. The dichotomists believe that the “spirit” and “soul” are used interchangeably in Scripture and are indistinguishable in nature and



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function. Scriptures that speak of both soul and spirit (Luke 1:46–47) are employing a Hebraic literary device called parallelism.

The Monistic View: The view of the human that asserts that there can be no final distinction between the body, soul, and spirit of a human being. A human being is fundamentally one unitary entity. The monists build their argument on the premises that Scripture says that the deceased are sleeping (Acts 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:6), there is no conscious life after death (Job 17:13–16; Ps. 6:5; 30:9; Isa. 38:18), and the hope given to God's people is not found in immediate life after death but in a final resurrection of the dead (1 Thess. 4:16–17).

[Q] Read the following verses and share which view they promote in your thinking: Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 10:28; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6; Philippians 1:23–24.

[Q] Is this debate on the constitution of mankind important? Why or why not?

Teaching Point Four: God gave humans certain responsibilities.

We were created to know God and to enjoy him forever. Related responsibilities include the following:

- * To reflect God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26–27; Eph. 4:23–24)
- * To represent God on Earth (Gen. 1:28; 2 Cor. 5:20)
- * To be stewards and caretakers of creation (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:6)
- * To live in community with others (John 17:20–23).

[Q] Give practical examples of how we can reflect God's image and likeness.

[Q] How can we represent him on Earth?

[Q] What does it mean to be stewards and caretakers of creation?

[Q] How does it glorify God when we love others?

Teaching Point Five: Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in Genesis 3:1–19.

Adam and Eve's sin was rooted in three areas:

- * It struck at the basis of knowledge by giving a different answer to the question, "What is true?" (Gen. 2:17 vs. Gen. 3:4)



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* It struck at the basis for moral standards by giving a different answer to the question, “What is right?” (Gen. 2:17 vs. Gen. 3:5)

* It struck at the basis for personal identity by giving a different answer to the question, “Who am I?” (Gen. 1:26 vs. Gen. 3:5)

[Q] How have you seen these three things manifested in your life?

Grudem says in *Christian Beliefs*, “Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.”

Horton and Grenz say that:

The Old Testament word for sin, *chatha*, means to “miss the right point,” “to deviate from the norm,” “erroneous action,” and “to depart from God’s purpose.” It refers to specific actions, whether of thought, word, or deed. Only rarely does it describe a state of being. Other Hebrew words for sin include *awon*, meaning “crooked or twisted,” *avar*, meaning the crossing of a boundary, and *resha* meaning wrong or injustice.³

The New Testament word for sin, *hamartia*, means “to miss the mark.” According to Gottfried Quell in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the word refers to “an offense in relation to God with emphasis on guilt.” *Hamartia* can refer to a specific act (Mark 1:5; Acts 2:38; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 10:12) and to the defective, internal dimension of the human person (Rom. 6:6; Heb. 12:1).⁴

As both *chatha* and *hamartia* suggest, sin is primarily “missing the mark” or “falling short.” It entails our inability to be what God desires us to be, our failure to fulfill God’s intention for us.⁵

There are two classes of sin:

Sin of commission: an active sin, doing something that is wrong.

Sin of omission: a passive sin, not doing the right thing (Luke 10:30–37; James 4:17)

[Q] Do you struggle more with sins of commission or omission? Why?

[Q] What is your understanding of how Christians should deal with the sin in their lives?

The immediate effects of sin are recorded in Genesis 3:14–19. Salvation through Christ’s sacrifice corrects our legal standing before God, but sin continues to damage our relationship to

³ Horton, *Systematic Theology*, p. 274; Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p. 183.

⁴ Horton, p. 275; Grenz, p. 184.

⁵ Grenz, p. 184.



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God, our relationship to our physical surroundings, and our relationship to others.

- * Sin damaged our legal standing before God. However, when a Christian sins, his legal standing before God is unchanged (Rom. 8:1).
- * Sin damaged our relationship with God (Eph. 4:30; Isa. 59:2).
- * Sin damaged our relationship with our physical surroundings (Gen. 3:16–19).
- * Sin damaged our relationship with others (Gen. 3:16).

The concept of original sin refers to a sin that dwells in our hearts (Mark 7:14–23; Matt. 12:33–37). Grenz says, “The theological concept of original sin, therefore, carries several connotations. It refers to the ‘original’ or first sin. It denotes the depraved nature or ‘pollution’ that forms the origin or source of our own sins. And it can encompass the origin or ground for the declaration of condemnation, the guilt that hangs over us.”⁶

Sin entered the world through Adam’s disobedience. Because of Adam’s sin, we are counted guilty (Rom. 5:12, 19). We have inherited and are born with a sinful nature (Rom. 7:18; Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Isa. 64:6).

[Q] Do you think there are varying degrees of sin? Read John 19:11 and James 3:1 before answering.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point (pick one or more of the following to do on your own this week):

- **Pray the prayer found in Psalm 139:23–24 and confess any sins to God.**
- **Does your view of yourself reflect that you have been created in God’s image? If not, how can you begin to view yourself differently?**
- **Think through what Scripture says are the responsibilities of God’s people. How are you fulfilling those responsibilities? What can you begin to do now to help fulfill those responsibilities?**

⁶ Grenz, p. 190.



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Participant's Guide

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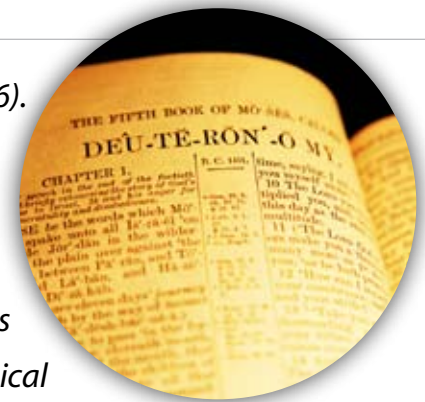
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Adam and Eve sinned, affecting us all.

Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). However, by a voluntary act of will, Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6). That first sin had several repercussions. Man was excommunicated from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23), a curse was pronounced (Genesis 3:14–19), the process of physical death began (Genesis 2:17), and man died spiritually (Romans 5:12–19). Sin separated humankind from God (Ephesians 2:11–18) and left man in a fallen or sinful condition (Romans 3:23).¹

Scripture: Genesis 1:26; 2:17; 3:6, 14–19, 23; Romans 3:23; 5:12–19; Ephesians 2:11–18

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church.



¹ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



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Part 1 Identify the Issue

“We may encapsulate our human identity as God’s creatures in three postulates: We are the good creation of God, we are marred through our fall to sin, but we are also the objects of God’s redemptive activity.”²

Read Genesis 1:26–31; 2:18–25.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: We were created for God’s glory.

The first question in the Westminster Larger Catechism is, “What is the chief and highest end of man?” The answer is, “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and to fully enjoy him forever.”

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³ Horton, *Systematic Theology*, p. 274; Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p. 183.

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⁶ Grenz, p. 190.



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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point (pick one or more of the following to do on your own this week):

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The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Leader's Guide

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The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Our salvation comes only through Christ.

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God. The Scripture declares his virgin birth (Matthew 1:18–23); his sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:4–5); his miracles (Acts 2:22; 10:37–38); his substitutionary death on the Cross (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24); his bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:1–6; 1 Corinthians 15:4); and his exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9, 11; Philippians 2:9–11).¹

Scripture: Matthew 1:18–23; 28:1–6; Acts 1:9, 11; 2:22; 10:37–38; 1 Corinthians 15:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22, 24; 1 John 3:4–5

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church.



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The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Grenz says that Christology is the study of the identity and mission of the Christ, whom Christians proclaim is Jesus of Nazareth.²

In Matthew 16:15, Jesus asked, “But what about you? ... ‘Who do you say I am?’” This is the most important question we will ever answer. The way we answer that question will have profoundly personal and eternal consequences. Grudem summarizes the biblical teaching about Jesus as follows: “Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.”³

Discussion Questions:

[Q] What does John mean when he says in John 1:14 that “the Word became flesh”? How is Jesus the Word?

[Q] How would you answer Jesus if he asked you, “Who do you say I am?”

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus was fully human.

There is a great deal of scriptural evidence that Jesus was fully human:

- * Jesus was born. Read Matthew 1:18 and Luke 2:7.
- * Jesus had a human body and experienced physical limitations. Read John 4:6; 19:28; Matthew 4:2; and Luke 23:46.
- * Jesus grew intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Read Luke 2:40 and Hebrews 5:8.

² Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*.

³ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*.



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* Jesus expressed human emotions. Read John 12:27; 13:21; Matthew 8:10; and John 11:35.

* Jesus had a human nature and yet was sinless. Read Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; and 1 John 3:5.

Because Jesus was fully human, he has the ability to act in the following ways. Read each verse and name the way his humanity helps us:

* Romans 5:19

* Hebrews 2:17

* Hebrews 2:18

* Hebrews 4:15

* 1 Timothy 2:5

* 1 Peter 2:21

[Q] After reading these verses, why is it so important that we understand that Jesus was fully human?

[Q] What kind of misconceptions might we have if we fail to understand Jesus' humanity?

Teaching Point Two: Jesus was fully God.

The word *incarnation* refers to the fact that Jesus was God in human flesh. In Bible Doctrine, Grudem defines *incarnation* as “the act of God the Son whereby he took to himself a human nature.”

The following truths help support the fact that Jesus was fully God:

* Jesus' birth was supernatural. Read Matthew 1:18 and Galatians 4:4.

* Scripture claims that Jesus is God. Read Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9; and Hebrews 1:3.

* Jesus claimed that he was God. Read John 8:58 and Revelation 22:13.

* Jesus displayed attributes of deity and performed miracles: He changed water into wine (John 2:1–11). He multiplied food (Matt. 14:13–21). He calmed a storm (Matt. 8:23–27). He knew people's thoughts (Mark 2:8). He forgave sins (Mark 2:5–7).



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Because Jesus was fully God, he has the ability to act in the following ways:

- * He bore the full penalty of sin.
- * He offers us salvation.
- * He mediates between God and us (1 Timothy 2:5).

[Q] Many people believe that Jesus was a good man, a great moral teacher, but that he was just a man. Why is it so important to realize that he is also fully God?

[Q] What difference does it make to your daily life that Jesus is God?

Teaching Point Three: Jesus was both fully God and fully man.

[Q] Read Romans 1:3–4. How do these verses reflect both Jesus' humanity and his divinity?

Horton, in his book *Systematic Theology*, calls this the Hypostatic Union: “the description of the unity of the divine and human natures in Jesus' one person.”

[Q] How does the virgin birth reveal Jesus' humanity and divinity? (Read Galatians 4:4)

There are at least four historical heresies surrounding Jesus' nature:

- * **Arianism**—Jesus was not fully God but was created by the Father.
- * **Apollinarianism**—Jesus had a human body, but not a human mind or spirit. His mind and spirit were part of his divine nature.
- * **Nestorianism**—Jesus was comprised of two separate persons—one for the human nature and one for the divine nature.
- * **Monophysitism or Eutychianism**—Jesus had a hybrid human and divine nature.

[Q] The Kenosis Theory purports that Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes while on Earth. Did Jesus empty himself of his divine abilities? What is the meaning of Philippians 2:5–7?

Grenz says, “The reformulated theory postulates that in the incarnation the Logos did not lay aside the divine attributes themselves, nor those powers inherent to deity. Rather, the son gave up the independent exercise of these powers. In other words, although he retained all the attributes, powers, or prerogatives of God, the earthly Jesus refused to draw on his divine



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abilities merely at his own whim. Rather, he willingly submitted his prerogative to use his divine capabilities to his Father's will as directed by the Spirit."

In *Systematic Theology*, Horton says, "When we use all the data of the New Testament on this subject, we realize that Jesus did not stop being God during the Incarnation. Rather, He gave up the independent exercise of the divine attributes. He was still fully Deity in His very being, but He fulfilled what seems to have been a condition of the Incarnation, that His human limitations were real, not artificial."

Leader's Note: For further reading on this topic, see *Across the Spectrum, Chapter 7, "The Christology Debate."*

Grudem says in *Bible Doctrine*, "The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe."

Teaching Point Four: Atonement is the work Christ did on the Cross to secure our salvation.

In *Bible Doctrine*, Grudem defines *atonement* as "the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation."

Related to atonement is propitiation: "a sacrifice that bears God's wrath to the end and in doing so changes God's wrath toward us in favor" (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Scriptural foundations of the Atonement:

- * The atonement was an act of the love of God (John 3:16 and Romans 5:8).
- * The sacrifice of Christ was necessary for atonement (Hebrews 2:17; 9:22).

Views of the Atonement:

- * **Ransom Theory**—Jesus' death and resurrection defeated Satan and set humankind free of his oppressive rule. Thomas Finger, Gustaf Aulen, and Gregory Boyd are modern proponents of this view.
- * **Satisfaction Theory**—Jesus' death brought "satisfaction" between God and humanity by paying the penalty that humanity's sin deserved. Anselm offered this theory in the 11th century.



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* **Governmental Theory**—Jesus did not literally take on the sin of the world and suffer God's punishment on behalf of humanity. He did suffer but as a demonstration of God's wrath against sin. Thus, the cross preserves God's moral government in the world. Hugo Grotius presented this view in the 17th century. Gordon Olson and George Otis, Jr. are modern proponents of this view.

* **Moral Influence Theory**—Jesus' death provided us with an example of how to live. The perfect love that Jesus demonstrated on the Cross is a model for us to emulate. It is also called the subjective view of atonement. Abelard proposed this view in the 12th century.

* **Penal Substitution Theory**—Jesus bore the sin of humanity and took the punishment that humanity deserved. This view was advocated by Martin Luther and John Calvin and has been defended in recent years by Leon Morris and John Stott. This is the view most embraced by the evangelical community.

In the book *Who Needs Theology?* Stanley Grenz states, “we might say that each of these theories presents a dimension of what remains a mystery greater than any single explanation—the mystery of salvation. There are elements of truth in each of these views. Christ's death does ransom us from the grip of death and Satan. Christ's death does provide satisfaction and give us an example of how to live. However, the Penal Substitution Theory most adequately and completely describes the Biblical view of atonement.”

[Q] Read 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 3:24–26; and 2 Corinthians 5:21. How would you explain atonement based on these verses?

Leader's Note: To read more on these views, see *Across the Spectrum, Chapter 8, "The Atonement Debate and Theology for the Community of God," pages 340–345.*

[Q] Read each of the following sets of verses. For each set state what you think they are saying about the significance of the Atonement:

- * Ephesians 2:13; Romans 5:9 (Sacrifice)
- * Matthew 20:28; Romans 3:24 (Redemption)
- * Romans 5:1, 10–11 (Reconciliation)
- * Acts 13:39; 1 Corinthians 6:11 (Justification)

“How are we to understand this central declaration of our faith? What is the significance of his death? And how does his sacrifice affect us? We cannot understand the full meaning of the cross



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of Christ. We can only stand in silence before it, acknowledge its wonder, and submit to its power” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*).

Teaching Point Five: Jesus Christ is the only means of our salvation.

The only means of salvation is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). He died on the Cross to pay the penalty of our sins (1 Pet. 2:24). He offers each of us a pardon for our sins (Heb. 9:26) and wants us to become children of God (John 1:12). When we put our faith in Christ, it triggers a spiritual chain reaction. We become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 3:5). We become citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20–21). We are given eternal life (John 3:16). We are adopted and become children of God (Gal. 4:4–7). Our sins are forgiven and forgotten (Heb. 8:12). We are credited with the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 4:4–5). We are born again (John 3:3). God takes ownership of us (1 Cor. 6:20). We receive an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:13–14; 1 Pet. 1:3–5). The evidence of salvation is twofold. The internal evidence is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16). The external evidence is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). We become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and are transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).³

The Doctrine of Salvation

We find forgiveness of sins and peace with God through the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Jesus alone. Our salvation is entirely a work of God and God alone.

[Q] Read each of the following verses and summarize what they say about our salvation: Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9–10, 13.

Components of Salvation

No one verse or passage of Scripture contains the chronological order of salvation. However, we see different components through different passages.

[Q] Read Ephesians 1:11–14 and Romans 8:29–30. What components of salvation do you find in these two passages?

Election

Grenz says, “We experience salvation because the triune God, who is relational in his own nature, chooses to enter into relationship with us his creatures. He calls sinful humans to share in the divine fellowship. This central dimension of God's eternal intention leads us to the concept of election” (*Theology for the Community of God*).

Read John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4–5; and 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

³ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Leader's Guide

The questions and debate surrounding the doctrine of election revolve around how election works, when it occurs, and on what basis it occurs.

[Q] What is your understanding of election?

Calling

The Holy Spirit calls us into relationship with God. The gospel call is often made in the proclamation of God's Word.

Grenz says, "Calling involves illumination and enablement. Illumination enlightens the minds of the hearers of the Gospel to see the divine truth disclosed therein. Additionally, the Holy Spirit enables an individual to respond to the Gospel call in repentance and faith. Illumination is directed primarily at the mind while enablement is directed primarily at the will" (*Theology for the Community of God*).

[Q] Read 1 Corinthians 1:9 and 2 Timothy 1:9. How would you describe God's call according to these two verses?

Regeneration

"Regeneration is a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us; sometimes called 'being born again'" (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

"Regeneration effects a change in our nature" (Horton, *Systematic Theology*).

[Q] Read Ezekiel 36:26–27; Ephesians 2:4–5; and 1 Peter 1:3. Describe what these say about regeneration.

Conversion

Grenz says, "Conversion is the life-changing encounter with the triune God which inaugurates a radical break with our old, fallen existence and a new life in fellowship with God." He goes on to say that "exactly how this 'great transaction' transpires—how God brings us to know him—is beyond our comprehension."

Grudem says, "Conversion is our willing response to the Gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of our sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation" (*Bible Doctrine*). Conversion involves conviction, repentance, and faith. It is a turning from sin and a turning to Christ. It involves the following:

* **Conviction**—the work of the Holy Spirit to expose sin and foster within us an awareness of our need for forgiveness.



The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Leader's Guide

* **Repentance**—a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ ... It is an intellectual understanding (that sin is wrong), an emotional approval of the teachings of Scripture regarding sin (a sorrow for sin and a hatred of it), and a personal decision to turn from it (a renouncing of sin and a decision of the will to forsake it and lead a life of obedience to Christ instead) (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Repentance was a central theme in the teachings of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:5–12; Luke 3:7–14), Jesus (Matt. 4:17; 11:20–21; Luke 5:32; 13:3–5; 15:7; 16:30; 24:45–47), the early church (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:19–20), and the apostolic teachers (Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

* **Faith**—trust or dependence on God based on the fact that we take him at his word and believe what he has said (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*). This is also called “saving faith,” and it involves knowledge, assent, and trust (Acts 20:21; Rom. 3:28).

Justification

“Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he 1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and thinks of Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us and therefore, 2) declares us to be ‘just’ or morally righteous in his sight” (Grudem, *Christian Beliefs*).

“Justification is a forensic term, referring to a change in our legal standing before God” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*).

“Justification effects a change in our status before God” (Horton, *Systematic Theology*).

[Q] Read Romans 3:24; 8:1; and Galatians 2:16, and explain what you think justification is according to these verses.

Adoption

“Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*). Read John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17; and Ephesians 1:4–5.

[Q] What does it mean to you that you have been adopted into God’s family?

Leader’s Note: See also 1 John 3:1–3; John 1:12; and Hebrews 2:10–11.

Sanctification

“Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

“Sanctification is the Holy Spirit accomplishing God’s purpose in us as Christian life proceeds” (Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*).



The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Leader's Guide

[Q] Read Romans 6:11–14; 12:2; and Ephesians 4:24 and explain sanctification according to these verses.

Leader's Note: See also John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Peter 2:2; Philippians 3:12–14; and 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Perseverance

“Perseverance refers to the ongoing operation of the Holy Spirit through which the work of God begun in our hearts will be carried on to completion” (Horton, *Systematic Theology*).

[Q] Read John 8:31; 10:27–29; and Ephesians 1:13, and summarize what perseverance means.

Leader's Note: See also Colossians 1:22–23 and Matthew 7:21–23.

Glorification

This is the “final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

“Glorification refers to the Spirit’s eschatological completion of our salvation, when he brings us to reflect perfectly the goal of our conversion and sanctification” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 and Romans 8:11.

Leader's Note: See also 2 Thessalonians 4:14–16 and Revelation 21:3–5.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Read the entire Book of Romans. You may find it helpful to memorize these verses so that you can use them when sharing your faith and beliefs with others: Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9–10, 13.



The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Participant's Guide

Participant's Guide

The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Our salvation comes only through Christ.

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God. The Scripture declares his virgin birth (Matthew 1:18–23); his sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:4–5); his miracles (Acts 2:22; 10:37–38); his substitutionary death on the Cross (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24); his bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:1–6; 1 Corinthians 15:4); and his exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9, 11; Philippians 2:9–11).¹

Scripture: Matthew 1:18–23; 28:1–6; Acts 1:9, 11; 2:22; 10:37–38; 1 Corinthians 15:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22, 24; 1 John 3:4–5

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church.



¹ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Participant's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Grenz says that Christology is the study of the identity and mission of the Christ, whom Christians proclaim is Jesus of Nazareth.²

In Matthew 16:15, Jesus asked, “But what about you?’ ... ‘Who do you say I am?’” This is the most important question we will ever answer. The way we answer that question will have profoundly personal and eternal consequences. Grudem summarizes the biblical teaching about Jesus as follows: “Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.”³

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus was fully human.

There is a great deal of scriptural evidence that Jesus was fully human:

- * Jesus was born. Read Matthew 1:18 and Luke 2:7.
- * Jesus had a human body and experienced physical limitations. Read John 4:6; 19:28; Matthew 4:2; and Luke 23:46.
- * Jesus grew intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Read Luke 2:40 and Hebrews 5:8.
- * Jesus expressed human emotions. Read John 12:27; 13:21; Matthew 8:10; and John 11:35.
- * Jesus had a human nature and yet was sinless. Read Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; and 1 John 3:5.

Because Jesus was fully human, he has the ability to act in the following ways. Read each verse and name the way his humanity helps us:

- * Romans 5:19

² Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*.

³ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*.



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Participant's Guide

- * Hebrews 2:17
- * Hebrews 2:18
- * Hebrews 4:15
- * 1 Timothy 2:5
- * 1 Peter 2:21

Teaching Point Two: Jesus was fully God.

The word *incarnation* refers to the fact that Jesus was God in human flesh. In *Bible Doctrine*, Grudem defines *incarnation* as “the act of God the Son whereby he took to himself a human nature.”

The following truths help support the fact that Jesus was fully God:

- * Jesus' birth was supernatural. Read Matthew 1:18 and Galatians 4:4.
- * Scripture claims that Jesus is God. Read Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9; and Hebrews 1:3.
- * Jesus claimed that he was God. Read John 8:58 and Revelation 22:13.
- * Jesus displayed attributes of deity and performed miracles: He changed water into wine (John 2:1–11). He multiplied food (Matt. 14:13–21). He calmed a storm (Matt. 8:23–27). He knew people's thoughts (Mark 2:8). He forgave sins (Mark 2:5–7).

Because Jesus was fully God, he has the ability to act in the following ways:

- * He bore the full penalty of sin.
- * He offers us salvation.
- * He mediates between God and us (1 Timothy 2:5).

Teaching Point Three: Jesus was both fully God and fully man.

Horton, in his book *Systematic Theology*, calls this the Hypostatic Union: “the description of the unity of the divine and human natures in Jesus' one person.”



The Doctrine of Christ and Salvation

Participant's Guide

There are at least four historical heresies surrounding Jesus' nature:

- * **Arianism**—Jesus was not fully God but was created by the Father.
- * **Apollinarianism**—Jesus had a human body, but not a human mind or spirit. His mind and spirit were part of his divine nature.
- * **Nestorianism**—Jesus was comprised of two separate persons—one for the human nature and one for the divine nature.
- * **Monophysitism or Eutychianism**—Jesus had a hybrid human and divine nature.

Grenz says, “The reformulated theory postulates that in the incarnation the Logos did not lay aside the divine attributes themselves, nor those powers inherent to deity. Rather, the son gave up the independent exercise of these powers. In other words, although he retained all the attributes, powers, or prerogatives of God, the earthly Jesus refused to draw on his divine abilities merely at his own whim. Rather, he willingly submitted his prerogative to use his divine capabilities to his Father’s will as directed by the Spirit.”

In *Systematic Theology*, Horton says, “When we use all the data of the New Testament on this subject, we realize that Jesus did not stop being God during the Incarnation. Rather, He gave up the independent exercise of the divine attributes. He was still fully Deity in His very being, but He fulfilled what seems to have been a condition of the Incarnation, that His human limitations were real, not artificial.”

Grudem says in *Bible Doctrine*, “The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe.”

Teaching Point Four: Atonement is the work Christ did on the Cross to secure our salvation.

In *Bible Doctrine*, Grudem defines *atonement* as “the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation.”

Related to atonement is propitiation: “a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath to the end and in doing so changes God’s wrath toward us in favor” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Scriptural foundations of the Atonement:

- * The atonement was an act of the love of God (John 3:16 and Romans 5:8).



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Participant's Guide

- * The sacrifice of Christ was necessary for atonement (Hebrews 2:17; 9:22).

Views of the Atonement:

* **Ransom Theory**—Jesus' death and resurrection defeated Satan and set humankind free of his oppressive rule. Thomas Finger, Gustaf Aulen, and Gregory Boyd are modern proponents of this view.

* **Satisfaction Theory**—Jesus' death brought "satisfaction" between God and humanity by paying the penalty that humanity's sin deserved. Anselm offered this theory in the 11th century.

* **Governmental Theory**—Jesus did not literally take on the sin of the world and suffer God's punishment on behalf of humanity. He did suffer but as a demonstration of God's wrath against sin. Thus, the cross preserves God's moral government in the world. Hugo Grotius presented this view in the 17th century. Gordon Olson and George Otis, Jr. are modern proponents of this view.

* **Moral Influence Theory**—Jesus' death provided us with an example of how to live. The perfect love that Jesus demonstrated on the Cross is a model for us to emulate. It is also called the subjective view of atonement. Abelard proposed this view in the 12th century.

* **Penal Substitution Theory**—Jesus bore the sin of humanity and took the punishment that humanity deserved. This view was advocated by Martin Luther and John Calvin and has been defended in recent years by Leon Morris and John Stott. This is the view most embraced by the evangelical community.

In the book *Who Needs Theology?* Stanley Grenz states, "we might say that each of these theories presents a dimension of what remains a mystery greater than any single explanation—the mystery of salvation. There are elements of truth in each of these views. Christ's death does ransom us from the grip of death and Satan. Christ's death does provide satisfaction and give us an example of how to live. However, the Penal Substitution Theory most adequately and completely describes the Biblical view of atonement."

"How are we to understand this central declaration of our faith? What is the significance of his death? And how does his sacrifice affect us? We cannot understand the full meaning of the cross of Christ. We can only stand in silence before it, acknowledge its wonder, and submit to its power" (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*).

Teaching Point Five: Jesus Christ is the only means of our salvation.



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The only means of salvation is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). He died on the Cross to pay the penalty of our sins (1 Pet. 2:24). He offers each of us a pardon for our sins (Heb. 9:26) and wants us to become children of God (John 1:12). When we put our faith in Christ, it triggers a spiritual chain reaction. We become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 3:5). We become citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20–21). We are given eternal life (John 3:16). We are adopted and become children of God (Gal. 4:4–7). Our sins are forgiven and forgotten (Heb. 8:12). We are credited with the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 4:4–5). We are born again (John 3:3). God takes ownership of us (1 Cor. 6:20). We receive an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:13–14; 1 Pet. 1:3–5). The evidence of salvation is twofold. The internal evidence is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16). The external evidence is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). We become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and are transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).³

The Doctrine of Salvation

We find forgiveness of sins and peace with God through the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Jesus alone. Our salvation is entirely a work of God and God alone.

Components of Salvation

No one verse or passage of Scripture contains the chronological order of salvation. However, we see different components through different passages.

Election

Grenz says, “We experience salvation because the triune God, who is relational in his own nature, chooses to enter into relationship with us his creatures. He calls sinful humans to share in the divine fellowship. This central dimension of God’s eternal intention leads us to the concept of election” (*Theology for the Community of God*).

Read John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4–5; and 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

The questions and debate surrounding the doctrine of election revolve around how election works, when it occurs, and on what basis it occurs.

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The Holy Spirit calls us into relationship with God. The gospel call is often made in the proclamation of God’s Word.

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Participant's Guide

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Grenz says, “Conversion is the life-changing encounter with the triune God which inaugurates a radical break with our old, fallen existence and a new life in fellowship with God.” He goes on to say that “exactly how this ‘great transaction’ transpires—how God brings us to know him—is beyond our comprehension.”

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* **Conviction**—the work of the Holy Spirit to expose sin and foster within us an awareness of our need for forgiveness.

* **Repentance**—a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ ... It is an intellectual understanding (that sin is wrong), an emotional approval of the teachings of Scripture regarding sin (a sorrow for sin and a hatred of it), and a personal decision to turn from it (a renouncing of sin and a decision of the will to forsake it and lead a life of obedience to Christ instead) (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Repentance was a central theme in the teachings of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:5–12; Luke 3:7–14), Jesus (Matt. 4:17; 11:20–21; Luke 5:32; 13:3–5; 15:7; 16:30; 24:45–47), the early church (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:19–20), and the apostolic teachers (Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

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“Justification effects a change in our status before God” (Horton, *Systematic Theology*).

Adoption

“Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*). Read John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17; and Ephesians 1:4–5.

Sanctification

“Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

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“Perseverance refers to the ongoing operation of the Holy Spirit through which the work of God begun in our hearts will be carried on to completion” (Horton, *Systematic Theology*).

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This is the “final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

“Glorification refers to the Spirit’s eschatological completion of our salvation, when he brings us to reflect perfectly the goal of our conversion and sanctification” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 and Romans 8:11.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Read the entire Book of Romans. You may find it helpful to memorize these verses so that you can use them when sharing your faith and beliefs with others: Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9–10, 13.



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit dwells in believers and guides the church.

The nine fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) are the by-product of a Spirit-filled life and evidence of spiritual maturity. The nine gifts of the Spirit are different manifestations of the Spirit to build up the body (1 Corinthians 12:1–11). We are instructed to diligently seek the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1), but they must be exercised in an orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:26–33) in the context of love (1 Corinthians 13:1–13).



The church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27) and has a three-fold purpose: To evangelize the world (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15–16), to worship God, and to equip for ministry (Ephesians 4:11–16; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:12).¹

Scripture: Mark 16:15–16; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:1–28, 31; 13:1–13; 14:1, 12; 26–33; Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 4:11–16

Based On: "Theology 101," by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church.

¹ From National Community Church Statement of Beliefs.



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He comes from the Father and is sent by the Son. Symbols of the Holy Spirit include wind and breath (Gen. 1:2; John 3:8; 20:22; Acts 2:2), water (John 4:10, 15; 7:37–39), fire (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:3), oil/anointing (Ex. 29:7; Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:20, 27), a seal (Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22), and a dove (Luke 3:22). Each of these symbols gives us a window into the personality and work of the Spirit.

Pneumatology is the study of who the Holy Spirit is, what He does, and the gifts He gives. (Horton, *Systematic Theology*)

Read John 14:26.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] How do each of the symbols of the Holy Spirit give us insight into his personality and work (wind, breath, water, fire, oil/anointing, seal, dove)?

[Q] How did the Holy Spirit contribute to the New Testament (John 14:26)?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Holy Spirit works on our behalf.

There are at least five things the Holy Spirit does.

* **Creates:** Read Genesis 1:2.

* **Convicts and Calls:** The Holy Spirit works in the conversion process as the agent who fosters conviction of sin. In addition to convicting people of sin, the Spirit is at work in conversion as the agent of God's call directed towards sinful humans (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*). Read John 15:26 and 16:8.

* **Adopts:** The Spirit makes us members of God's family. Read John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17; and Ephesians 1:4–5.



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Leader's Guide

★ **Sanctifies (Spiritual Growth):** In sanctification, the Spirit of God works to make us more and more like Christ. “It is our cooperation with the Spirit in living out in daily life the regeneration, justification, freedom, and power which is ours through conversion, so that we grow into Christlikeness and service to God” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*). “The work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and we are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness” (Westminster Catechism). Read Galatians 5:22–23.

The Holy Spirit also helps us in prayer (Rom. 8:26–27) and illuminates Scripture (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10) for us.

★ **Empowers:** “When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and thereafter, He gave power that enabled the ministry of Christ to be carried forward. It was not power in a general sense, that is, an increment of supernatural strength that could have many uses, but power for ministry that flowed from the Father through the Son” (Williams, *Renewal Theology*). Read Acts 1:4, 8 and Romans 15:18–19.

[Q] Are any of these five things new to you? If so, which one? How does it change your view of the Holy Spirit?

[Q] Give an example of how the Holy Spirit helped you in one of these ways.

Teaching Point Two: The Holy Spirit gives believers gifts to serve the church.

A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Read about the gifts of the Spirit in the following passages: Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 12:7–10, 28; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:11.

[Q] After reading these verses, what do you think is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are designed to build up the body, should be actively sought, should be exercised in an orderly way, and should be exercised in a context of love.

“Spiritual gifts are given to authenticate the gospel message throughout the church age, to help those in need, thereby demonstrating God’s mercy and love, to equip people for ministry, and to glorify God” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

[Q] What do you think is one of your spiritual gifts? How do you know?



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Leader's Guide

Two views on the charismatic gifts include cessationism and continuationism. They are defined as follows:

- * **Cessationism:** the charismatic gifts were intended to cease after the New Testament.
- * **Continuationism:** the charismatic gifts were intended to continue throughout history. Therefore, contemporary believers should be open to them and seek them.

[Q] Of these two views, which one do you lean toward? Why?

Leader's Note: For additional reading on this topic, see *Across the Spectrum, Chapter 15, "The Charismatic Gifts Debate."*

Teaching Point Three: We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

"We have an old gas boiler in our house. The pilot light is on all the time. But the boiler is not always giving out heat and power. Some have only got the pilot light of the Holy Spirit in their lives, whereas when people are filled with the Holy Spirit, they begin to fire on all cylinders (if you will forgive me for mixing metaphors!). When you look at these people, you can almost see and feel the difference" (Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*).

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon particular people at particular times for particular tasks. Read Exodus 31:3–5; Judges 6:34; 15:14; and Isaiah 61:1–2.

Now, the Holy Spirit is no longer reserved for particular people at particular times for particular tasks. Rather, he is poured out on all who follow Christ. Read the prophecy of this in Joel 2:28–29.

Now read examples of the Holy Spirit being poured out on believers in the early church: Acts 8:14–18; 19:1–7.

[Q] Read Galatians 5:16–18. From this passage, what do you think it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

[Q] Thinking of Nicky Gumbel's illustration of the old gas boiler, are you firing on all cylinders or simply keeping the pilot light on?

Teaching Point Four: The church has been given a mission.

Read Matthew 16:18.



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Leader's Guide

[Q] What did Jesus mean when he said that the gates of Hades will not overcome the church?

“Ecclesiology is the study of the biblical teachings concerning the church and its practices” (Horton, *Systematic Theology*).

“Church: the community of all true believers for all time” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

“Church: a people standing in covenant, who are a sign of the divine reign and constitute a special community” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*).

Ekklesia is the Greek word that is used to refer to the church in biblical writings. It was a commonly used word in first-century Rome, and it connoted an assembly. In *Theology for the Community of God*, Grenz wrote, “The choice of *ekklesia* as the designation of the Christian community suggests that the New Testament believers viewed the church as neither an edifice nor an organization. They were a people—a people brought together by the Holy Spirit—a people bound to each other through Christ—hence, a people standing in covenant with God. Above all, they were God’s people.”

[Q] The New Testament gives us several pictures of how Jesus intended the church to look.

Read and identify the relational metaphors mentioned in each of these Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; 2 Corinthians 11:2; 1 Peter 2:9.

The New Testament also uses agricultural pictures such as branches on a vine (John 15:5), an olive tree (Rom. 11:17–24), and a field of crops (1 Cor. 3:6–9).

“Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*).

There are at least three understandings of what the church is:

- * “Mystical Church: the one body composed of all believers of all ages (Heb. 12:22–23)” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*). This has also been called the “invisible church.” It transcends time and spatial boundaries.
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The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Leader's Guide

The mission of the church can be separated into three large categories—our outward mission of evangelism and service, our upward mission of worship, and our inward mission of discipleship.

* “Evangelism: proclamation of the Gospel to unbelievers” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*). Read Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15–16; and Matthew 28:19–20. Evangelism is more than just speaking the gospel; it is also demonstrating the love and mercy of God through action (Acts 11:29; 2 Cor. 8:4; 1 John 3:17).

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[Q] How do you practice each of the missions of the church (evangelism, worship, and discipleship)?

[Q] How do we as a group practice each of these missions?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: If you do not know your spiritual gifts, ask God to reveal them to you. Spend time looking up Scriptures that talk about our spiritual gifts. Consider doing a Bible study on spiritual gifts, such as ChristianBibleStudies.com's “[Use Your Spiritual Gifts](#).”



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Participant's Guide

Participant's Guide

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit dwells in believers and guides the church.

The nine fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) are the by-product of a Spirit-filled life and evidence of spiritual maturity. The nine gifts of the Spirit are different manifestations of the Spirit to build up the body (1 Corinthians 12:1–11). We are instructed to diligently seek the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1), but they must be exercised in an orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:26–33) in the context of love (1 Corinthians 13:1–13).



The church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27) and has a three-fold purpose: To evangelize the world (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15–16), to worship God, and to equip for ministry (Ephesians 4:11–16; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:12).¹

Scripture: Mark 16:15–16; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:1–28, 31; 13:1–13; 14:1, 12; 26–33; Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 4:11–16

Based On: “Theology 101,” by Heather Zempel, written for National Community Church.

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The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Participant's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He comes from the Father and is sent by the Son. Symbols of the Holy Spirit include wind and breath (Gen. 1:2; John 3:8; 20:22; Acts 2:2), water (John 4:10, 15; 7:37–39), fire (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:3), oil/anointing (Ex. 29:7; Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:20, 27), a seal (Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22), and a dove (Luke 3:22). Each of these symbols gives us a window into the personality and work of the Spirit.

Pneumatology is the study of who the Holy Spirit is, what He does, and the gifts He gives. (Horton, *Systematic Theology*)

Read John 14:26.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Holy Spirit works on our behalf.

There are at least five things the Holy Spirit does.

- * **Creates:** Read Genesis 1:2.
- * **Convicts and Calls:** The Holy Spirit works in the conversion process as the agent who fosters conviction of sin. In addition to convicting people of sin, the Spirit is at work in conversion as the agent of God's call directed towards sinful humans (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*). Read John 15:26 and 16:8.
- * **Adopts:** The Spirit makes us members of God's family. Read John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17; and Ephesians 1:4–5.
- * **Sanctifies (Spiritual Growth):** In sanctification, the Spirit of God works to make us more and more like Christ. "It is our cooperation with the Spirit in living out in daily life the regeneration, justification, freedom, and power which is ours through conversion, so that we grow into Christlikeness and service to God" (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*). "The work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and we are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness" (Westminster Catechism). Read Galatians 5:22–23.



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

Participant's Guide

The Holy Spirit also helps us in prayer (Rom. 8:26–27) and illuminates Scripture (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10) for us.

* **Empowers:** “When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and thereafter, He gave power that enabled the ministry of Christ to be carried forward. It was not power in a general sense, that is, an increment of supernatural strength that could have many uses, but power for ministry that flowed from the Father through the Son” (Williams, *Renewal Theology*). Read Acts 1:4, 8 and Romans 15:18–19.

Teaching Point Two: The Holy Spirit gives believers gifts to serve the church.

A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Read about the gifts of the Spirit in the following passages: Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 12:7–10, 28; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:11.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are designed to build up the body, should be actively sought, should be exercised in an orderly way, and should be exercised in a context of love.

“Spiritual gifts are given to authenticate the gospel message throughout the church age, to help those in need, thereby demonstrating God’s mercy and love, to equip people for ministry, and to glorify God” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

Two views on the charismatic gifts include cessationism and continuationism. They are defined as follows:

* **Cessationism:** the charismatic gifts were intended to cease after the New Testament.

* **Continuationism:** the charismatic gifts were intended to continue throughout history. Therefore, contemporary believers should be open to them and seek them.

Teaching Point Three: We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

“We have an old gas boiler in our house. The pilot light is on all the time. But the boiler is not always giving out heat and power. Some have only got the pilot light of the Holy Spirit in their lives, whereas when people are filled with the Holy Spirit, they begin to fire on all cylinders (if you will forgive me for mixing metaphors!). When you look at these people, you can almost see and feel the difference” (Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*).



The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Church

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In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon particular people at particular times for particular tasks. Read Exodus 31:3–5; Judges 6:34; 15:14; and Isaiah 61:1–2.

Now, the Holy Spirit is no longer reserved for particular people at particular times for particular tasks. Rather, he is poured out on all who follow Christ. Read the prophecy of this in Joel 2:28–29.

Now read examples of the Holy Spirit being poured out on believers in the early church: Acts 8:14–18; 19:1–7.

Teaching Point Four: The church has been given a mission.

Read Matthew 16:18.

“Ecclesiology is the study of the biblical teachings concerning the church and its practices” (Horton, *Systematic Theology*).

“Church: the community of all true believers for all time” (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

“Church: a people standing in covenant, who are a sign of the divine reign and constitute a special community” (Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*).

Ekklesia is the Greek word that is used to refer to the church in biblical writings. It was a commonly used word in first-century Rome, and it connoted an assembly. In *Theology for the Community of God*, Grenz wrote, “The choice of *ekklesia* as the designation of the Christian community suggests that the New Testament believers viewed the church as neither an edifice nor an organization. They were a people—a people brought together by the Holy Spirit—a people bound to each other through Christ—hence, a people standing in covenant with God. Above all, they were God’s people.”

Read and identify the relational metaphors mentioned in each of these Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; 2 Corinthians 11:2; 1 Peter 2:9.

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The Doctrine of the Future

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Doctrine of the Future

There will be a final judgment.

There will be a final judgment in which the dead will be resurrected and judged according to their works (Matthew 25:31–46; Romans 2:1–9).

Everyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life, along with the devil and his angels, will be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11–15). Those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be resurrected and will stand at the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded for their good deeds (1 Corinthians 4:5).¹

Scripture: Matthew 25:31–46; Romans 2:1–9; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Revelation 20:11–15

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The Doctrine of the Future

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.

According to Wayne Grudem, eschatology is “the study of the ‘last things’ or future events” (*Bible Doctrine*). Stanley Horton says it is “the study of what happens in the afterlife and what happens at the end of the age and in the final state of both the righteous and the wicked” (*Systematic Theology*).

In *Theology for the Community of God*, Stanley Grenz encourages us to understand the word last in the sense depicted by the Greek term telos, which means “goal.” He explains, “In the doctrine of last things we speak about God’s goal or purpose for his activity in the lives of individuals, in human history, and in creation.” Thus, Grenz offers the following definition: “Eschatology is the study of the Christian understanding of the glorious future God has for his creation. It is the systematic-theological reflection on history as the narrative of God’s activity in bringing humankind to God’s intended goal. Corporate eschatology is reflection on history from the perspective of the consummation of the human story in accordance with God’s plan.”

A distinction can be made between personal eschatology and general eschatology. Grenz says personal eschatology is “the quest to know what lies beyond death.” Grudem says it is “the study of future events that will happen to individuals, such as death, the intermediate state, and glorification.”

Grudem defines general eschatology as “the study of future events that will affect the entire universe, such as the second coming of Christ, the millennium, and the final judgment.” Grenz says it is “the quest to understand God’s intention for humankind and for human history. It seeks to answer the question, ‘Is our corporate story going somewhere?’”

Discussion Questions:

- [Q] Sum up what you know or believe about future events as they concern the church. Where has most of your knowledge come from?
- [Q] What good can come from a study of future events?
- [Q] What might be an unhealthy interest in future events?



The Doctrine of the Future

Leader's Guide

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: We should have a basic grasp of what is to come.

Because the apocalyptic writings are so difficult to understand and there are so many interpretations, one may wish to avoid the study of these things. If the timing and purpose of these events is largely irrelevant to our salvation, why should we consider them important? Grenz names at least three reasons:

[Q] Read Matthew 24:14 and Mark 1:15. Name one reason according to these two verses.

Leader's Note: Evangelism

[Q] Read Romans 13:11–14 and 1 John 3:2–3. What is a reason according to these passages?

Leader's Note: Holiness

[Q] Read 1 Corinthians 15:58 and 1 Peter 4:13. What reason do you find here?

Leader's Note: Steadfastness and courage

Teaching Point Two: There are certain things we should know about final events.

The following events are mentioned in the Bible as components of the last things. The debate revolves around when, how, and why these things occur.

Christ's Return

Grenz says, “The goal toward which all history is rushing is the return of Christ, which will mark the establishment of community and hence the ultimate realization of God’s will, which is his reign” (Matthew 24:30–31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

[Q] What do the following verses tell us about Christ’s return?

* Matthew 24:44; Acts 1:11; and Revelation 1:7.

Leader's Note: Christ's return will be sudden, personal, bodily, and visible. See also John 14:3; Hebrews 9:28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:10; and 1 John 3:2.



The Doctrine of the Future

Leader's Guide

* Matthew 24:36; 25:13; and Mark 13:33.

Leader's Note: The timing of Christ's return is unknown.

* Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13; and James 5:7.

Leader's Note: Christians should eagerly expect Christ's return. See also Matthew 24:30–31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and Revelation 22:20.

The Millennium

Read Revelation 20:4–5.

This passage in Revelation is the only place that the Millennium is referenced in the Scriptures. Throughout church history, theologians have debated the interpretation of John's millennial vision. There are three primary views:

* **Premillennialism**—Jesus returns prior to the thousand-year reign and will be physically present on the earth to reign during those thousand years. This is a pessimistic world view: The world gets worse. Proponents: D. A. Carson and Wayne Grudem.

A type of premillennialism, called dispensational premillennialism, divides human history into distinct periods or “dispensations.” They assert that there are two different plans for the church and for Israel, and they believe that a pretribulation rapture will remove the church prior to the tribulation and the millennium. Dispensational premillennialists tend to take the most literal approach to prophetic Scriptures. A proponent is John MacArthur.

* **Amillennialism**—there is no future millennium. Rather, Revelation 20 is now being fulfilled in the present church age. All major future events (Christ's return, resurrection, judgment, and the establishment of a new heaven and new earth) will occur at once. This is a realistic world view: The world is what it is. Proponents: Louis Berkhof, John Calvin, and other Reformers.

* **Postmillennialism**—Jesus returns after an earthly golden age which is brought about by the work of the church and the Holy Spirit. This is an optimistic world view: The world gets better. Proponents: Augustine and B. B. Warfield.

[Q] Which view do you hold? Why?

Leader's Note: For further reading, see Across the Spectrum, Chapter 17: “The Millennium Debate.” See also Theology for the Community of God, Chapter 22: “The Consummation of History.”



The Doctrine of the Future

Leader's Guide

Final Judgment

Judgment is a recurring theme in the Scriptures. New Testament passages that refer to the final judgment include Matthew 10:15; 11:22–24; 12:36; 25:31–46; Acts 17:30–31; Romans 2:5; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Hebrews 6:2; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; and Revelation 20:11–15.

[Q] Read the following passages to determine three definite conclusions concerning the final judgment:

* Acts 17:30–31 and 2 Timothy 4:1.

Leader's Note: Jesus will judge.

* Romans 2:5 and Revelation 20:5.

Leader's Note: Unbelievers will be judged.

Grudem says hell is “a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.” Grenz says it is “a place of isolation, estrangement, and loneliness” (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Passages that speak of hell include Matthew 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43; Luke 16:22–24, 28; and Revelation 14:9–11.

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Grudem says heaven is “the place where God most fully makes known his presence to bless. It is in heaven where God most fully reveals his glory and where angels, other heavenly creatures, and redeemed saints all worship him.” Scriptures that speak of heaven include Acts 1:9–11; 7:55–56; and John 14:2–3.

Creation of a New Heaven and New Earth

Revelation 21:1 says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away”

The new creation will be a place of God's presence (Rev. 21:3), a place of community (Rev. 22:2–3; Isa. 65:25), and a place of glorification (1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Peter 1:4; Rev. 21:4–5).

[Q] Read Romans 8:19–21. How would you describe the wait and hope for the new heaven and earth? What will it mean to us when it happens?



The Doctrine of the Future

Leader's Guide

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Grenz says, “This is eschatology at its biblical best. The message about God’s future provides the foundation and motivation for proclaiming the word of God in the present. God reveals to us his promise for the future consummation in order to call us to proper attitude and action in the present As the study of God’s overarching purpose, the doctrine of last things forms the proper climax of systematic theology. Eschatology leads us back to where we started. It brings us to the God who desires that all creation share in the community of his presence and thereby participate in the eternal glory of the one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (*Theology for the Community of God*).

Action Point: Does the vision of God’s eternal glorious future compel you to live differently? If so, how? How can we encourage one another through this vision of the future? How can we agree to disagree about the finer points of this doctrine? What is the most important thing we can all agree on?



The Doctrine of the Future

Participant's Guide

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My Redeemer Lives

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The Doctrine of the Bible

Leader's Guide

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