

EXPLORING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Field Guide

Volume 1

*Revelation, Scripture,
and the Triune God*



Exploring Christian Theology Field Guide, Volume 1

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*Non nobis,
Domine,
non nobis,
sed nomini tuo
da gloriam.*

Contents

How to Use This Field Guide	3
Preface	4
Introduction	5
The Christian Story in Four Acts	6
 Part One: <i>How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth</i>	7
High-Altitude Survey	8
Quiz 1: High-Altitude Survey	10
Passages to Master	11
Quiz 2: Passages to Master	17
Holy Scripture in Retrospect	18
Quiz 3: Holy Scripture in Retrospect	21
Facts to Never Forget	22
Dangers to Avoid	24
Principles to Put Into Practice	26
Quiz 4: Facts, Dangers, and Principles	28
 Part Two: <i>God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit</i>	29
High-Altitude Survey	30
Quiz 5: High-Altitude Survey	32
Passages to Master	33
Quiz 6: Passages to Master	42
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Retrospect	43
Quiz 7: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Retrospect	49
Facts to Never Forget	50
Dangers to Avoid	52
Principles to Put Into Practice	56
Quiz 8: Facts, Dangers, and Principles	58

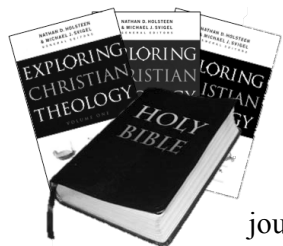
How to Use This Field Guide

Before you step outdoors to embark on a trek through unfamiliar territory, you need a few essentials. Basics like proper footwear and clothing are an obvious start. But you also need the right amount of food and water for the journey, and if it's a long hike, maybe some gear for climbing, cooking, or camping. Travel companions are strongly recommended (there's still safety in numbers). Oh, and don't forget a GPS *and* (not *or*) a good, old fashioned, ever-reliable *compass and map*. Yes, *real* paper and *real* moving parts. Because if you get lost, the last thing you want to worry about is finding your way back before the battery on your GPS runs out!



Exploring Christian theology is a lot like a trek into unfamiliar territory. You may traverse a few well-worn, familiar paths, but if you venture too far from the main route, you'll want to have everything you need for a safe and enjoyable experience. Like a compass and map, the three-volume *Exploring Christian Theology (ECT)* series provides you with some essential gear. But like any set of tools, you need to know how to use the wealth of information in *ECT* to get the most out of your journey.

All of us are embarking on this adventure with different degrees of experience and different destinations. You may be involved in personal Bible study or one-on-one discipleship with a seasoned mentor...or you're part of a small group wanting to dig deeper. Perhaps you're using *ECT* as a primer for theological or ministry training...or as a review in preparation for formal ordination. Maybe you're walking through a pre-baptism, new member, or confirmation class...or shepherding mature believers through leadership training. However you're using *ECT*, this *Field Guide* is designed to help you more easily navigate from where you're starting to where you want to go.



The *Field Guide* should be used with a few other pieces of essential gear for the journey. You'll need the corresponding *ECT* book because the questions and their page numbers correspond to those printed volumes. And don't forget your Bible. You'll be doing a lot of work in the Scriptures. Also, be prepared to mark up, highlight, quick-tab, sticky-note, underline, or bookmark both the *ECT* volume and your Bible. This will help you better interact with the *Field Guide* questions and discussions. Finally, though you're free to explore Christian theology on your own, you'll get the greatest benefit from this series if you work through the *Field Guide* with another person or as part of a group—especially in your local church community.

Because the *ECT* books can be used for both beginners and advanced students of Christian theology, not all the questions in the *Field Guide* are necessarily suited for your particular purpose. Like hiking maps that rate trails on difficulty, we've indicated three levels for each individual question as well as a few entire exercises. Note, though, that students following trail 3 should also venture into level 1 and 2 questions...but trail 1 explorers don't need to worry about levels 2 and 3.



- ① ❖ **Light**—For new believers, baptism or confirmation candidates, teenagers.
- ② ❖ **Moderate**—For intermediate readers, lay leader training, membership classes, adults.
- ③ ❖ **Challenging**—For college or seminary students, pastors and teachers, mature believers.

Finally, never forget that God the Holy Spirit is your guide. Yes, He has graciously provided pastors, teachers, and a community of faith to help—and He has chosen to work through them in His teaching and leading of the Church (Eph. 4:11–16). But without God working in your mind, heart, and will, all of us would be stuck at the trailhead, never able to take even the first steps in exploring Christian theology. So start with prayer...and always give God thanks for your progress!

Preface

Introduction & The Christian Story in Four Acts



① Introduction

①	To Read	“Introduction” (pp. 9–10)
②	To Do	Spend time in prayer with your mentor or group, petitioning God the Father, through His Son, Jesus, to teach you by His Holy Spirit to not only understand the concepts in this study but to be challenged and changed as a result of your reading, reflection, and discussion.

① ❖ Why do you think so many people are “turned off” by the words “theology” or “doctrine”?

① ❖ In light of the Introduction (pp. 9–10), why is theology important for the Christian life?

② ❖ What might be some lingering dangers in studying theology? What are your personal fears, apprehensions, or doubts about the value of theology?

① ❖ What are three things you hope to gain from a study of Christian theology?

① The Christian Story in Four Acts

①	To Read	“The Christian Story in Four Acts” (pp. 13–22)
②	To Study	Acts I: Creation; Acts II: Fall; Act III: Redemption; Acts IV: Restoration; <i>You Are Here</i>
③	To Memorize	Chart, “God’s Story: From the Garden to Glory” (p. 15)
③	To Do	Reflect on and discuss how some of your favorite books, films, or television shows reflect certain elements of the “Hero Cycle” (a.k.a., “Hero’s Journey”). Discuss how elements of these stories parallel in some ways God’s story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration?

① ❖ What are the “Four Acts” of the Christian story (pp. 15–20)? What key events occur in each major movement (pp. 15–22)?

② ❖ Review the six bullet points on page 14. How have you personally experienced these things? Why would the Christian story help address those feelings and experiences?

③ With your group or mentor, discuss how viewing theology as a grand story or drama differs from how theology is often treated. How might this approach be helpful to people in our modern culture?

① ❖ What is the theme of the Old Testament (p. 16)?

① ❖ What is the theme of the New Testament (p. 17)?

② ❖ Who are the villains and victims of the Christian story (pp. 16–17)? What were the results of their villainous actions?

② ❖ Who is the central “character” in the Christian story (pp. 17–21)? What did He accomplish through His heroic actions? How did He accomplish them?

Part One

How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth



① High-Altitude Survey

①	To Read	“High-Altitude Survey” (pp. 25–30)
②	To Study	General revelation; special revelation; verbal plenary inspiration; inerrancy; basic method of Christian theology
③	To Memorize	Chart, “Inerrancy Inferred From Inspiration” (p. 28)
③	To Do	Explore what your church teaches regarding the doctrines of revelation, Scripture, and the sources/authorities of theology.

① ❖ Define “general revelation” (p. 26).

② ❖ According to Romans 1:19–20, what is revealed through creation (p. 26)?

① ❖ Define “verbal, plenary inspiration” (p. 27).

③ Discuss with your mentor or group what’s unique about the Bible (p. 27). How does the Bible differ from all other human texts? How should this affect how we read and use it?

③ ❖ How would you explain and defend the classic doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration from Scripture (p. 27)?

① ❖ Define “special revelation” (p. 27).

② ❖ What kinds of things do we know only by special revelation?

③ Discuss with your group or mentor whether a person can truly know God and His salvation without special revelation.

③ ❖ According to the section “Faith-Full Theological Thinking” (pp. 28–30), what is the Christian approach to faith and understanding/reason? How does this differ from common secular approaches to knowledge and thought?

③ ❖ When we define theology as “faith seeking understanding,” where does this faith come from? What is the content of this faith (pp. 28–30)?

③ Quiz 1: High-Altitude Survey

1. The term “general revelation” refers to:

- a. Revelation of God given to particular people at particular times.
- b. Revelation of God generally accessible to all people at all times.
- c. Revelation of God hidden from all except those who diligently seek it.

2. The term “special revelation” refers to:

- a. Revelation of God given to particular people at particular times.
- b. Revelation of God generally accessible to all people at all times.
- c. Revelation of God hidden from all except those who diligently seek it.

3. Which of the following is most accurate regarding the nature of Scripture?

- a. Scripture is completely divine, with no human element mixed in.
- b. Scripture is like any other human document, except completely true.
- c. Scripture is simultaneously human and divine.

4. The inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture:

- a. Has been the overwhelming view of the Christian church throughout history.
- b. Was lost for most of church history and restored by Protestants.
- c. Is only one of many legitimate views among orthodox, protestant, evangelicals.

5. The classic method of doing Christian theology is:

- a. Reason seeking faith.
- b. Reason and faith working together.
- c. Faith seeking understanding.

6. Scripture is true because:

- a. God speaks truthfully and He has spoken His words through Scripture.
- b. God’s spokespersons who wrote the Bible can be trusted to be honest.
- c. God’s words in Scripture have been shown to be scientifically and historically true.

7. The phrase “verbal, plenary inspiration” means:

- a. Everything said by God, Jesus, or the Spirit in the Bible is inspired.
- b. Each and every word of the Bible is inspired by God.
- c. All of Scripture as a whole is inspired, but certain words are not necessarily inspired.

① Passages to Master

①	To Read	“Passages to Master” (pp. 31–56)
②	To Study	Psalm 19:1–6; Romans 1–3; Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:14–4:4; 2 Peter 1:19–21; 1 Corinthians 2:10–13; John 17:17; Deuteronomy 31:24–26; 2 Peter 3:15–16; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; the Chart, “An Orthodoxy View of Inspiration” (p. 46); the Chart, “What Inerrancy Does <i>Not</i> Mean” (p. 48); the Chart, “Three Kinds of Tradition” (p. 55)
③	To Memorize	Psalm 19:1–2; Romans 1:19–20; Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21; 1 Corinthians 2:13; John 17:17; Deuteronomy 31:26; Joshua 1:8; 2 Peter 3:15–16; 2 Thessalonians 2:15
③	To Do	Find out your church’s official position regarding the gift of prophecy today. Discover your church’s attitude toward the role of tradition for interpreting and applying Scripture and doing theology.

(1) *Psalm 19:1–6: God Speaks Through Creation* (pp. 32–33)

① ❖ What things are revealed about God through His creation (Psalm 19:1)?

③ ❖ In light of Psalm 19:1–6, how can Christians use discoveries from science in theology (pp. 32–33)?

③ With your mentor or group, discuss both the limits and benefits of knowing God through His creation (33–35). Is the knowledge of God through creation enough to save us? Why or why not? Interact with the whole context of Rom. 1–3 in your discussion.

(2) *Romans 1–3: Humans Rebel Against God’s Creation* (pp. 33–35)

① ❖ According to Romans 1:19–20, what should be “clearly seen” about God through His creation (pp. 33–34)?

② ❖ Why isn’t the existence and character God perceived by all humans (pp. 34–35)?

- ③ ❖ Agnosticism and atheism (see glossary for definitions) have become more popular in recent years. How do the truths of Romans 1–3 address these skeptical views toward God’s existence? What is the “cure” for atheism in light of Romans 3 (see p. 35)?

③ The author writes, “Perceived with eyes wide open, illumined by the Holy Spirit, and interpreted by faith, general revelation helps us better understand God, His creation, and His plan of redemption. In a balanced Christian method of doing theology, general and special revelation complement—not compete with—each other” (p. 35). Discuss with your group or mentor how this relates to the ongoing tensions between reason and faith or science/religion.

(3) *Hebrews 1:1–2: God Spoke Through His Prophets...and Then Through His Son* (pp. 36–38)

- ① ❖ What are the two standards by which a false prophet can be identified (p. 36)?
- ② ❖ How would you answer if someone were to ask you, “Why did God use people to deliver His message? Why doesn’t He just talk to each of us directly?” (pp. 36–38)

- ① ❖ On what matters regarding prophecy do all evangelicals agree (pp. 36–37)?

③ Discuss examples of false prophets in recent history or those who may still be around today. How do their teachings and actions expose them as false prophets?

- ② ❖ Why is Jesus a superior revelation to all the prophets (p. 37)? What is the relationship of Christ to God’s general and special revelation (pp. 37–38)?

(4) 2 Timothy 3:14–4:4: All Scripture Is Inspired by God (pp. 38–41)

- ① ❖ What does the term “inspiration” mean” (pp. 38, 40)?

- ③ ❖ What’s the difference between “a prophet was inspired by God” and “Scripture was inspired by God” (p. 39)? Why would this distinction matter to the doctrine of Scripture’s inspiration?

- ③ ❖ What’s the difference between saying “every Scripture is God-breathed” and “all Scripture is God-breathed” (p. 40)? Can a person believe one but not the other?

- ② ❖ Explain the doctrine of biblical sufficiency. What is Scripture sufficient to accomplish (p. 41)?

- ① ❖ Define the “inerrancy” of Scripture (p. 41).

- ② ❖ How is inerrancy related to a right understanding of inspiration (p. 41)?

(5) 2 Peter 1:19–21: Prophets Moved by the Spirit (pp. 42–44)

- ① ❖ According to 2 Peter 1:21, who is ultimately responsible for the content of Scripture?
- ③ ❖ Synthesize the teaching of 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:12–21, describing in your own words how the inspiration of Scripture works (pp. 42–44).

③ Discuss with your group or mentor the various ways the Holy Spirit could have “moved” or “carried along” the writers of Scripture to produce the texts they wrote? Discuss whether the prophetic authors were always aware that they were writing Scripture.

- ② ❖ What was God’s role in producing Scripture? What was the prophet’s role?

(6) 1 Corinthians 2:10–13: Words Taught by the Spirit (pp. 44–47)

- ① ❖ According to 1 Corinthians 2:10–13, where did the apostles get their words of wisdom (p. 45)?
- ③ ❖ Why is it important that the very *words* of prophecy came by the Spirit, not just the thoughts (p. 46)?

③ Study the chart, “What Inerrancy Does *Not* Mean” (p. 48), then with your group or mentor, answer the following hypothetical objections to the doctrine of inerrancy:

- 1) Jesus spoke Aramaic, but the Gospels were written in Greek. So the Bible’s record of Jesus’s words can’t be without error because they aren’t Jesus’s actual words, but translations.
- 2) The New Testament sometimes leaves out or changes words when it quotes the Old Testament. That sounds like an error to me.
- 3) I read that Greek scholars say that 2 Peter uses bad Greek and Revelation even has grammatical errors. That disproves inerrancy!
- 4) The Bible talks about the sun rising and setting, but science proves the earth moves, not the sun. Therefore, the Bible makes scientific errors.

- ② ❖ How does Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 2:10–13 lead to the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture (pp. 46–47)?

(7) *John 17:17: God's Word Is True*

- ① ❖ Define “inerrancy of Scripture” in your own words (p. 47).
- ③ ❖ What's the difference between “the Bible is completely true in all it asserts” and “the Bible is completely true in all it affirms”?

(8) *Deuteronomy 31:24–26: Birth of the Old Testament Canon (pp. 49–51)*

- ① ❖ What does the word “canon” mean when referring to Scripture (p. 50; also see glossary)?
- ② ❖ How did the Israelites know the five books of Moses were to be their first canon (pp. 49–50)? Who selected this canon?

- ② ❖ What was the fundamental reason for accepting a writing as part of the Old Testament canon (pp. 50–51)?

③ Discuss with your group or mentor the best answer to the question, “How did those Old Testament books find their way into the Bible (p. 51)?”

(9) 2 Peter 3:15–16: Rise of the New Testament Canon (pp. 52–53)

- ① ❖ What are the four points regarding the early formation of a New Testament collection found in 2 Peter 3:15–16 (pp. 52–53)?

- ③ ❖ Why is it significant that the Apostle Peter recognized a collection of Paul’s writings as “Scripture”?

(10) 2 Thessalonians 2:15: Keeping the [Good] Tradition (pp. 53–56)

- ① ❖ When Jesus spoke about bad tradition, to what kind of tradition was He referring (p. 54)?

- ① ❖ When Paul spoke about good tradition, to what kind of tradition was He referring (p. 54)?

③ After studying the chart, “Three Kinds of Tradition” (p. 55), discuss with your mentor or group several examples each for bad tradition, neutral tradition, and good tradition within your own church or denomination.

③ Quiz 2: Passages to Master

1. **“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”**
 - a. Psalm 19:1
 - b. Romans 1:19
 - c. Hebrews 1:2
2. **“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night.”**
 - a. Deuteronomy 31:26
 - b. Joshua 1:8
 - c. Psalm 19:2
3. **“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.”**
 - a. Romans 1:20
 - b. Hebrews 1:1
 - c. 2 Peter 1:20
4. **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”**
 - a. 1 Corinthians 2:13
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 2:15
 - c. 2 Timothy 3:16
5. **“No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.”**
 - a. John 17:17
 - b. 2 Peter 1:20
 - c. 2 Peter 3:15
6. **Which passage of Scripture teaches the truthfulness of God's word?**
 - a. Psalm 19:1–2
 - b. John 17:17
 - c. 2 Peter 3:15–16
7. **Which passage relates to the beginning of the New Testament canon?**
 - a. Hebrews 1:1–2
 - b. 2 Peter 3:15–16
 - c. 1 Corinthians 2:13
8. **Which passage relates to God's revelation through creation?**
 - a. Deuteronomy 31:24–26
 - b. Romans 1:19–20
 - c. 2 Thessalonians 2:15

② Holy Scripture in Retrospect

②	To Read	“Holy Scripture in Retrospect” (pp. 57–71)
②	To Study	Chart summarizing the major people, events, and developments in history regarding Scripture and Revelation (p. 71)
③	To Memorize	Three major “bullet points” identified by your mentor from each period of church history (p. 71)
③	To Do	For advanced students, after reading the narrative for each of the four periods of church history, read the corresponding selected quotes in the section “Voices from the Past and Present” (pp. 95–110). Note themes that stay the same in every era as well as things that differ or change.

The Patristic Period (100–500)

- ③ ❖ If somebody were to ask you why the Christians in the early church (the first five centuries) accepted certain books of the New Testament as canonical and rejected others as non-canonical, how would you answer (pp. 60–63)?

③ After studying the Muratorian Canon Fragment (pp. 62–63), discuss with your mentor or group what your church’s doctrines and practices would look like today if we only had the books clearly mentioned in the Muratorian Canon in the second century. What doctrines are affected by that not-quite-complete collection of New Testament writings?

- ② ❖ What were the two differing approaches to the use of secular philosophy typified by Origen of Alexandria on the one hand and Tertullian of Carthage on the other (pp. 63–64)?

③ Discuss with your mentor or group how your church tradition uses the insights of philosophy, science, or other secular fields of study in doing theology. What are the potential benefits? What are the potential dangers?

- ② ❖ What was the early church's consistent attitude toward the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture (p. 64)?

The Medieval Period (500–1500)

- ③ ❖ What was the long-term negative impact of the Roman Catholic Church's dependence on Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (pp. 65, 66)?

- ② ❖ Though the medieval church never denied the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, how did the Bible's absolute authority become weakened and its simple message become clouded (pp. 66–67)?

- ② ❖ How did the Renaissance begin to challenge medieval approaches to biblical authority (pp. 67–68)?

The Protestant Period (1500–1700)

- ② ❖ Define the term *Sola Scriptura* as the original reformers used it (p. 68).
- ③ ❖ How is the original understanding of *Sola Scriptura* similar or different from how you have understood the term?
- ② ❖ What change in the interpretation of Scripture occurred during the reformation (p. 69)?
- ② ❖ Define “the Apocrypha” (p. 69). When were the Apocrypha dogmatically declared to be part of the canon of Scripture by the Roman Catholic Church (p. 69)?

The Modern Period (1600–500–1500)

- ② ❖ In the modern era, what were the new authorities that replaced biblical authority (p. 70)?
- ② ❖ Who were the “fundamentalists” in the twentieth century (p. 70)?

③ With your mentor, church leader, or group, discuss your church’s or denomination’s historical relationship to twentieth century “fundamentalism” or “liberalism.”

③ Quiz 3: Holy Scripture in Retrospect

1. The early church rejected all the Jewish Scriptures until they were able to run the Old Testament books through a rigorous test to determine that they were really inspired by God.
T. True
F. False
2. Church fathers (AD 100–500) interpreted Scripture primarily in light of Christ’s person and work.
T. True
F. False
3. The Church throughout its history has always been against philosophy and science as aids to understanding Scripture and doing theology. Only in the modern era have theologians been tainted by philosophy and science.
T. True
F. False
4. Until the modern era (after 1700), the vast majority of Christians throughout the patristic, medieval, and protestant periods assumed the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.
T. True
F. False
5. The Church achieved stable agreement regarding the contents of the Old and New Testament canon sometime in the medieval period through papal decree.
T. True
F. False
6. The Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible was the standard Roman Catholic version until it was replaced by the King James Bible in 1611.
T. True
F. False
7. All official scholars and teachers of the church interpreted the Bible literally—*not allegorically or spiritually*—until the rise of modern liberal theology in the 1700s.
T. True
F. False
8. The Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* means that “Scripture alone” contains truth. Every other source of information is necessarily mixed with deceptive falsehood.
T. True
F. False
9. The Roman Catholic Church has always included the Apocrypha in their official, sanctioned canon of Scripture. The Protestants deleted these books from the canon during the Reformation.
T. True
F. False
10. During the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy, the doctrine of Scripture’s inerrancy was not a major issue. Liberals and conservatives both agreed on the authority of the Bible, but they disagreed on how it should be interpreted.
T. True
F. False

① Facts to Never Forget

①	To Read	“Facts to Never Forget” (pp. 72–77)
②	To Study	Biblical supports for the five “facts to never forget” (pp. 72–77)
③	To Memorize	Chart of the five “facts to never forget” (p. 77)
③	To Do	Drawing from your study of “Passages to Master” (pp. 31–56), add at least one key passage of Scripture to each of the five “facts to never forget” (pp. 72–77)

Fact 1: God is knowable and has made himself known (pp. 72–73).

- ① ❖ How is it that finite, imperfect humans can truly know the infinite, perfect God (p. 73)?

Fact 2: God reveals himself through various means (pp. 73–74).

- ① ❖ What are some of the various means through which God has revealed himself (p. 73–74)?

- ② ❖ To which of these do we have access today?

Fact 3: Scripture is true in all it affirms (pp. 74–75).

- ① ❖ Why is it important that Christians embrace the complete truthfulness of Scripture?

Fact 4: Jesus Christ is the center and goal of Scripture (p. 76).

- ① ❖ When a teacher or church removes Christ as the center and goal of Scripture, what kinds of things end up taking His place?

Fact 5: The goal of theology is transformation, not just information (p. 77).

- ① ❖ Describe how a person might behave if he or she studied the Bible and theology merely for information instead of for transformation? Reverse it. How would a person behave if he or she simply sought to be transformed without being informed by Scripture and sound doctrine?

③ Discuss with your group or mentor which of the “Facts to Never Forget” were most insightful for you personally. Why?

① Dangers to Avoid

①	To Read	“Dangers to Avoid” (pp. 78–85)
②	To Study	The guiding principles for the Scriptures found in the seven “Dangers to Avoid” (pp. 78–85) and the “Erroneous Approaches to Scripture” (pp. 83–84)
③	To Memorize	Chart of the “Seven Dangers to Avoid.”
③	To Do	While going through “Voices From the Past and Present” (pp. 95–110) recognize and list where the authors identify one or more of the seven “Dangers to Avoid.”

Danger 1: Unnecessary Elective Surgery (pp. 78–79)

③ ❖ How would you respond to someone who gradates the authority of the Scriptures (p. 79)?

① ❖ In your experience, what doctrines do Christians tend to avoid or downplay (p. 79)?

Danger 2: Watered-Down Wine (pp. 79–80)

① ❖ What are some common reasons people water down the commands of Scripture (p. 80)?

Danger 3: Hearing Without Hearing (pp. 80–81)

① ❖ What does it look like when a person “hears” God’s word without *truly* hearing it (p. 81)? Give examples from your experience.

Danger 4: Cold, Dead Orthodoxy (pp. 81–82)

- ① ❖ What are some of the practical dangers of “dead orthodoxy” (p. 82)?

Danger 5: Arrogant Reading (pp. 82–84)

- ① ❖ What does it mean that we don’t create meaning in Scripture (p. 83)?

Danger 6: Doctrine-less Discipleship (p. 84)

- ① ❖ Why do you think doctrine is important for discipleship (p. 84)?
- ② ❖ Which doctrines do you believe are of first importance for discipleship?

Danger 7: Christian Pole-Sitting (pp. 84–85)

- ① ❖ How should the danger of “Pole-Sitting” inform how you study the Scriptures (pp. 84–85)?
- ② ❖ How should this danger inform how you approach personal devotions (pp. 84–85)?

- ③ In your group or with your mentor, discuss what you believe to be the most pressing “Dangers to Avoid” threatening your church or denomination at the present. How could these be addressed in your own local ministry context?

① Principles to Put Into Practice

① To Read	“Principles to Put into Practice” (pp. 86–94)
② To Study	The “Six Principles,” specifically focusing on their implementation in the study of the Scriptures.
③ To Memorize	The chart, “Principles to Put into Practice” (p. 93).
③ To Do	Place the “Principles to Put into Practice” in order from “most applicable” (marked #1) to “least applicable” (marked #6), taking into consideration your current personal need for practical growth in these areas.

Principle 1: Heed Scripture as from the mouth of God (pp. 86–87).

- ① ❖ Why is Scripture inherently authoritative (pp. 86–87)?

Principle 2: Be Taught to be Stable (pp. 87–89).

- ① ❖ What is the key to rightly handling the Scriptures (p. 89)?

Principle 3: Be a Doer, Not Merely a Hearer (pp. 89–90).

- ① ❖ What key passage commands Christians to be doers of the word and not just hearers (p. 90)?

Principle 4: Maintain a Balanced Diet of Truth Sources (pp. 90–92).

- ① ❖ What are the four elements of a balanced truth diet for growing Christians (p. 91)?

- ② ❖ Describe how an improper theology can come from unbalanced view of truth (p. 91)?

Principle 5: Seek Understanding in the Context of Faith (pp. 92–93).

- ① ❖ What are some problems with interpreting Scripture outside a context of faith? (pp. 92–93)?

Principle 6: Nurture the Character of a Virtuous Theologian (pp. 93–94).

- ① ❖ What are the four couplets that describe the nurture of Christian virtue in theological studies (p. 93)?
- ② ❖ How might you include the nurturing of Christian virtue in your ministry context (p. 93)?
What specific steps can you take to nurture Christian virtues?

③ Share with your mentor or group the top three principles you need to personally put into practice in your own life. Conclude your study by praying for each other to be transformed by the power of the Spirit in conformity with God's Son, Jesus Christ.

① Quiz 4: Facts, Dangers, and Principles

1. Throughout history, God has revealed himself through _____.
 - a. Scripture alone.
 - b. Personal intuition and feelings, mostly.
 - c. Various means.
2. Scripture is true in all it _____.
 - a. Affirms.
 - b. Asserts.
 - c. Alleges.
3. _____ is the center and goal of Scripture.
 - a. Jesus Christ.
 - b. Holy living.
 - c. The church.
4. Scripture should be studied _____.
 - a. Privately and independently, so we are not distracted by outside influences.
 - b. Only by professionally trained scholars and theologians.
 - c. Within a community of faith.
5. To avoid idiosyncrasies and distorted doctrines, churches and teachers ought to _____.
 - a. Teach the whole counsel of God, not just selected portions of Scripture or their favorite doctrines.
 - b. Be part of a denomination that follows a strict religious calendar and a strict liturgy.
 - c. Study the *Exploring Christian Theology* series repeatedly.
6. We should heed Scripture as _____.
 - a. A book containing the best human wisdom history has produced.
 - b. We would heed our own consciences regarding right and wrong.
 - c. If from the very mouth of God.
7. _____ is the classic method of doing Christian theology.
 - a. "Evidence seeking proof."
 - b. "Faith seeking understanding."
 - c. "Moral principles seeking practical living."
8. The goal of good theology is _____.
 - a. Transformation, not just information.
 - b. Illumination, not just information.
 - c. Anticipation, not inspiration.
9. Without _____ we'll never be genuinely good students of theology.
 - a. Good theology professors at an accredited seminary.
 - b. Cultivating Christian virtue.
 - c. Opportunities for research and writing.

Part Two

God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit



① High-Altitude Survey

①	To Read	“High-Altitude Survey” (pp. 127–132)
②	To Study	Ultimate questions; agnosticism; atheism; pantheism; panentheism; polytheism; henotheism; theism; Trinitarianism
③	To Memorize	Eight biblical assertions for Trinitarianism (pp. 130–132)
③	To Do	Discover how your church expresses the Trinitarian faith in its creed, confession, or doctrinal statement.

① ❖ How do you, as a Christian, answer the four big questions concerning life and existence (p. 127)?

② ❖ How would non-Christians answer these same four questions (p. 127)? Give examples of people you know who would answer them differently than you. You may need to indicate a variety of answers for each question.

① ❖ Define the following terms in about five words each. You may use the glossary in this volume to help:

Agnosticism:

Pantheism:

Panentheism:

Atheism:

Theism:

Henotheism:

Polytheism:

③ Discuss with your group or mentor how agnostics, atheists, pantheists, and theists answer the questions, “Is there a God?” and “If so, what is God like?” (128–129) How would you, as a Christian, respond to these answers?

① ❖ How does the Christian faith *uniquely* answer the question “What is God like?” (p. 129)?

① ❖ What do Christians mean by the term “trinity”? Define this term as best you can based on reading pages 129–131.

① ❖ What are the eight biblical assertions that comprise the doctrine of the Trinity (pp. 130–131)?

① ❖ What is the Christian teaching regarding Jesus Christ that makes the faith unique (p. 131)?

③ With your mentor or group members, discuss the point C.S. Lewis is making in the quotation on page 131. Explain his argument regarding the Christian concept of God and explain why many see this as good argument for the truthfulness of the Christian faith. On the other hand, how might skeptics respond to this argument?

③ Quiz 5: High-Altitude Survey

1. A simple definition of “pantheism” is:

- a. God is everything, and everything is God.
- b. God dwells within everything.
- c. Everything reflects God’s power and character.

2. Of the following true statements, which is completely unique to a Christian view of God?

- a. An all-powerful God created everything out of nothing.
- b. The one true God eternally exists as three co-equal Persons.
- c. There is no more and no less than one eternal God.

3. Which of the following would plead “ignorant” when it comes to the question of the existence of God?

- a. Agnostics
- b. Henotheists
- c. Atheists

4. The most accurate definition of the Trinity is:

- a. There is one true God, but He has three separate parts: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- b. In the unity of the Godhead, there are three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- c. The unique Person of God sometimes acts as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Holy Spirit.

5. Which of the following is *not* one of the eight biblical affirmations that lead to the doctrine of the Trinity?

- a. The Father is God.
- b. There are three Gods in one.
- c. The Son is not the Spirit.

6. The basic Christian belief concerning the person of Christ is:

- a. He is the God-Man, fully divine (yet distinct from the Father and Spirit) and fully human (yet without sin).
- b. He is part God, part man, thus able to serve as an eternal mediator between the two.
- c. He is “God in a bod,” a fully divine being temporarily indwelling a fleshly body and taking the place of the soul of Jesus.

7. In Islam and Judaism, God is:

- a. Basically the same nature as the God of Christianity, but less loving.
- b. Exactly the same God, except one is called “Allah” and the other is called “YHWH.”
- c. One person, not triune, and therefore not eternally relational.

① Passages to Master

①	To Read	“Passages to Master” (pp. 133–167)
②	To Study	Genesis 1:1–3; Genesis 1:26–27; Exodus 3:13–15; Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 139; Isaiah 6:1–8; 1 John 4:7–16; Ephesians 1:3–14; John 1:1–18; Colossians 1:15–19; Philippians 2:6–11; John 14–17; Matthew 28:19; the Chart, “How Do We Speak about God?” (p. 146); the Chart, “Ten Ways God Can Be ‘Present’” (p. 150); the bullet-point quotations regarding Christ’s deity (p. 158); the Chart, “Trinity/Christ” (p. 166)
③	To Memorize	Genesis 1:1–3; Genesis 1:26–27; Exodus 3:14; Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 139:7–10; Isaiah 6:3; 1 John 4:13–16; Ephesians 1:3, 13; John 1:1–3, 14, 18; Colossians 1:15–19; Philippians 2:6–11; John 14:16–17; 15:26; Matthew 28:19
③	To Do	Discover how your church communicates the biblical truth about God in its worship, preaching, and teaching. Ask pastors, teachers, or worship leaders how they have included teaching about the nature and character of God, the Trinity, or the person of Christ and the Holy Spirit in their ministries.

(1) *Genesis 1:1–3: In the Beginning . . . God* (pp. 134–137)

① ❖ What is the basic meaning of “Elohim” (p. 135)?

① ❖ What does Genesis 1:1–3 tell us about God’s relationship to creation (pp. 134–137)?

③ With your mentor or group, discuss whether you see hints of the Trinity in Genesis 1:1–3. Explain why or why not. Is it possible that God placed such foreshadowing of the Trinity in the Old Testament that would only be fully understood later?

(2) *Genesis 1:26–27: “Let Us Make Man in Our Own Image”* (pp. 137–138)

① ❖ How did the early church Fathers understand the creation of humans according to “the image of God”? How did they understand God speaking in the first person plural, “Let Us make...” (p.137)?

- ③ ❖ Do you agree with the early church Fathers' Trinitarian and Christ-centered interpretation of Genesis 1:26–27 (p. 137–138)? Why or why not?

(3) *Exodus 3:13–15: What's Your Name?* (pp. 138–139)

- ① ❖ What does the Hebrew name of God, YHWH, mean (p. 139)? How is this significant for understanding the nature of God?
- ② ❖ What is the difference in emphasis between “Elohim” and “YHWH” (p. 139)?
- ② ❖ Use ten words to describe YHWH based on the discussion of this unique divine name on pp. 138–139. Which of these is particularly meaningful for you at this point in your relationship with God? Why?

③ Discuss with your group or mentor whether the mysterious “Angel of the Lord” who appears throughout the Old Testament is an appearance of the Son of God before He become incarnate. Perhaps read commentaries or do a little research on your own.

(4) *Exodus 20:7*: “What’s in a Name?” (pp. 139–143)

- ① ❖ What are the three basic principles regarding God’s names important for understanding the God of the Bible (pp. 140–142)?

- ② ❖ Make a list of the diverse names discussed in this section (pp. 140–142). Which of these is most significant to you at this point in your walk with God? Why?

- ① ❖ What does it mean to take the Lord’s name in vain (pp. 142–143)? What does it mean to make it holy?

(5) *Deuteronomy 6:4*: “God the One and Only” (pp. 143–145)

- ① ❖ What does it mean in Deuteronomy 6:4 that God is “one” (p. 143)?

- ② ❖ How does the Old Testament “make room” or “allow for” further revelation of God as one-in-three (pp. 143–145)?

(6) Psalm 139: Classifying the Big Attributes of God (pp. 145–153)

- ① ❖ List the twelve “big” or “incommunicable” attributes of God discussed in this section. Beside each, write your own one or two word definition.
 - ② ❖ What is the difference between communicable and incommunicable attributes of God (p. 146, compare pp. 152–153)?
 - ③ ❖ Look up and read the passages in the chart, “Ten Ways God Can Be ‘Present’” (pp. 150–151). For each of these ways God is “present,” consider how they affect your view on how you “meet with God,” “spend time with the Lord,” “walk in His presence,” or “seek His face.”
- ③ With your mentor or group, discuss the tension divine sovereignty and human responsibility (pp. 1 especially interacting with the quotation of Augustine your leader, church, or denomination have a view differ this? What are some practical implications of various this issue?

- ① ❖ Return to your list of definitions of the twelve “big” attributes of God. Which of these is most encouraging for you today? Why? How does this truth help you in your Christian walk?

(7) *Isaiah 6:1–8: God Is Holy; We’re to Be Holy Too* (pp. 153–154)

- ① ❖ What does it mean that God is “holy” (pp. 153–154)? What are the corollaries of God’s holiness (p. 153)?

- ① ❖ How are God’s people to reflect this holiness in their lives (pp. 153–154)?

- ③ Discuss with your group or mentor what you believe to be the greatest challenges to individual Christian holiness today. What are the greatest challenges to the holiness of the church as a corporate body? How can we face these challenges?

(8) *1 John 4:7–16: God Is Love* (pp. 154–155)

- ② ❖ Why do you think both the world and Christians tend to emphasize God's love and de-emphasize His holiness (p. 154)?

- ③ ❖ What are some practical dangers of emphasizing God's love over holiness? What are some dangers of emphasizing God's holiness over His love?

- ① ❖ What are the various ways God manifests His love (p. 155)? How has He manifested these in your life?

(9) *Ephesians 1:3–14: God the Father* (pp. 156–157)

- ① ❖ What aspects of God's character and actions are being communicated by calling God "Father" (pp. 156–157)?

- ② ❖ Knowing that God is not human, nor “male,” why do you think Scripture uses fatherly language for God (pp. 156–157)?

③ With your group or mentor, discuss how one’s earthly father might positively or negatively affect one’s view of God as “Father” and fatherly. Would it ever be appropriate to speak of God as “Mother” or motherly? Why or why not?

(10) *John 1:1–18: God in the Flesh* (pp. 157–159)

- ① ❖ What are the “three crucial facts” that emerge from John 1:1–18 (pp. 157–159)?

- ① ❖ What does the title “Word” mean with reference to the Son of God (pp. 157–158)?

- ② ❖ What is the relationship between God the Father and God the Son (pp. 158–159)?

- ③ ❖ Study the passages in the bullet point list on page 158 that assert the full deity of the Son of God. Mark them in your Bible and consider committing these references to memory.

(11) *Colossians 1:15–19*: The Son Before (and Above) Creation (pp. 159–160)

- ① ❖ What does it mean that the Son is “firstborn” of creation (p. 159)?
- ② ❖ Why does this *not* mean that the Son was the first created being (p. 160)?

(12) *Philippians 2:6–11*: The Humility of the Incarnate Son (pp. 160–163)

- ① ❖ According to Paul in Philippians 2, what should be our practical response to the humility of the Son of God (p. 161)?
- ② ❖ How does the Old Testament anticipate the coming of a Savior who would be both divine and human (pp. 161–162)?
- ① ❖ What does “kenosis” mean? What is the proper understanding of kenosis as it relates to the incarnation (p. 162)?

- ③ ❖ In seeking to understand the doctrine of the incarnation, what are the four “land mines” we need to avoid (pp. 162–163)? Put these in your own words.

(13) *John 14–17: The Holy Spirit Is God* (pp. 163–166)

- ① ❖ In what ways do we know the Holy Spirit is personal, not merely an impersonal force or energy of God (p. 163)?
- ② ❖ How does John 14:16–17 and 15:26 clearly distinguish between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (p. 165)?

(14) *Matthew 28:19: In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (pp. 166–167)

- ① ❖ How does Matthew 28:19 relay to us the doctrine of the Trinity (pp. 166–167)?
- ② ❖ Why is it important to affirm the true, full deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God in three persons (p. 167)?

③ Quiz 6: Passages to Master

1. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . .' So God created man in his own image."
 - a. Genesis 1:26–27
 - b. Genesis 2:19–20
 - c. Genesis 3:16–17
2. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."
 - a. Exodus 20:7
 - b. Deuteronomy 6:4
 - c. Exodus 3:14
3. "... who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."
 - a. Colossians 1:15–19
 - b. Hebrews 1:1–3
 - c. Philippians 2:6–7
4. "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."
 - a. Acts 1:8–9
 - b. John 15:26
 - c. Matthew 28:19
5. "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
 - a. Exodus 3:14
 - b. Exodus 20:7
 - c. Deuteronomy 6:4
6. Which passage of Scripture teaches the omnipresence of God?
 - a. Psalm 19:1–2
 - b. Psalm 139:7–10
 - c. Psalm 26:8
7. Which passage unites Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in name?
 - a. Hebrews 1:1–2
 - b. John 14:16–17
 - c. Matthew 28:19
8. Which passage of Scripture most clearly teaches the deity of the Son?
 - a. Colossians 1:15
 - b. John 1:1–3
 - c. John 14:16

② Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Retrospect

②	To Read	“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Retrospect” (pp. 168–185)
②	To Study	Chart, “Major Patristic Councils” (p. 176); chart summarizing the major people, events, and developments in history regarding the doctrine of the Trinity (p. 185)
③	To Memorize	Chart, “Major Patristic Councils” (p. 176); major “bullet points” identified by your mentor from each period of church history (p. 185)
③	To Do	For advanced students, after reading the narrative for each of the four periods of church history, read the corresponding selected quotes in the section “Voices from the Past and Present” (pp. 221–241). Note themes that stay the same in every era as well as things that differ or change.

The Patristic Period (100–500)

- ② ❖ What are the five “raw gems” of Trinitarian theology that were part of the original faith delivered to the saints (p. 168)?

③ With your group or mentor, discuss challenges to the doctrine of the Trinity related to its history that you’ve encountered from cults or in pop culture. Where do they say the doctrine of the Trinity actually came from? Why is understanding the history of Trinitarianism important?

- ③ ❖ In what sense can we speak of development *in* Trinitarian theology, but not development *of* Trinitarian theology (pp. 169–177)?

② ❖ How did each Christian's baptismal confession reinforce Trinitarian theology in the early church? What did they confess about each Person of the Godhead (pp. 169–170)?

③ ❖ How did each of the following heretical movements in the early church distort the doctrine of Christ or the Trinity (pp. 171–176)?

Ebionism:

Docetism:

Marcionism:

Valentinianism:

Arianism:

Apollinarianism:

Nestorianism:

Eutychianism:

② ❖ What does *homoousios* mean with regard to the Son's relationship with the Father (pp. 173)?

- ③ ❖ After reviewing the Patristic Period column in the chart on page 185, summarize in a few sentences the major developments in Trinitarianism during this period (pp. 169–177).

The Medieval Period (500–1500)

- ② ❖ What were the issues at Constantinople II, Constantinople III, and Nicaea II? How were they related to Christology (pp. 178–179)?
- ② ❖ How did the Roman Catholic Church modify the Nicene Creed? How did this affect Trinitarian theology (pp. 179–180)?

- ③ ❖ From a biblical, theological, and historical perspective, who do you believe had the most faithful view in the medieval *filioque* controversy—the Eastern Orthodox Church or the Roman Catholic Church (p. 179)? Why?

- ③ ❖ What were some negative changes that occurred in the medieval period regarding Trinitarian theology (pp. 180–181)? What were positive developments (pp. 177–181)?

The Protestant Period (1500–1700)

- ② ❖ What was the mainline Protestant position of the Reformers regarding Trinitarian theology (p. 181)?

- ③ ❖ How did some “radical reformers” threaten classic orthodox Trinitarianism (pp. 181–182)?

- ③ Some Protestant churches and denominations value the contribution of the Trinitarian Creeds more than others. Discuss with your group or mentor how your church views the authority or usefulness of the Creeds. What are the benefits of learning or reciting them?

② ❖ What new heretical perspectives developed in the Protestant Period (p. 182)?

③ ❖ Summarize in your own words the development of Trinitarian theology in the Protestant Period (pp. 181–182).

The Modern Period (1600–500–1500)

② ❖ In what ways did the Enlightenment damage Trinitarian theology (pp. 182–183)?

③ ❖ What were the new standards and authorities that caused the criticism of classic orthodox Trinitarianism (pp. 182–184)?

- ② ❖ What new aberrant “isms” replaced Trinitarian theism in the Modern Period (pp. 183–184)? With which of these have you personally come into contact?
- ③ ❖ In what churches and denominations is orthodox Trinitarian theology being preserved in the church today?
- ③ ❖ Based on the chart on page 185 and your study of this chapter, sum up the history of Trinitarian development through the Patristic, Medieval, Protestant, and Modern Periods in a short paragraph (pp. 168–185).

③ Quiz 7: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Retrospect

1. Christians in the first few centuries did not believe in the deity of Christ, but they finally decreed the doctrine of Christ's deity at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.
T. True
F. False
2. Both Docetism and Marcionism asserted that Jesus did not have a real body but was merely a phantom who appeared to have the body.
T. True
F. False
3. The views of Nestorianism and Eutychianism regarding the divine and human natures of Christ can be considered opposites of each other.
T. True
F. False
4. The Greek term *homoousios* was used to declare that the Son was the greatest created being against the Arians, who asserted that Jesus was the same Person as the Father.
T. True
F. False
5. The Roman Catholic Church restored the phrase *filioque*, "and the Son" to the Nicene Creed after the Eastern Orthodox Church had deleted it.
T. True
F. False
6. In the Medieval period, the doctrine of the Trinity was lost, requiring the protestant reformation to restore belief in the Trinity.
T. True
F. False
7. The major protestant reformers embraced the Trinitarianism and Christology of the first four ecumenical councils.
T. True
F. False
8. Some rationalistic "radical" reformers of the sixteenth century denied the doctrine of the Trinity.
T. True
F. False
9. Enlightenment criticisms of theology attacked the authority of the Bible, but they continued to affirm the doctrine of the deity of Christ because it made historical and philosophical sense.
T. True
F. False
10. The Modern era is marked by many thinkers who departed from the atheism, agnosticism, and deism of the Reformation to embrace orthodox Trinitarian theism.
T. True
F. False

Answers to Quiz 3
1=F (the early church, from the first century onward, embraced the deity and humanity of Christ; the Council of Nicaea affirmed with refined language what the church had always believed about Christ); 2=T (Docetism is the belief that Jesus only "appeared" to have a physical body but was, in fact, purely spirit; Marcionism affirmed a docetic Christology); 3=T (Nestorianism divided the two natures, denying their true unity; Eutychianism mixed the two natures, denying their distinction); 4=F (Arians asserted that the Son was a creature, while the orthodox used the term *homoousios* to affirm that the Son had the same divine nature as the Father); 5=F (the Roman Catholic Church added the *filioque*; the Eastern Orthodox Church maintained the original form of the Creed); 6=F (the Medieval period continued to affirm and defend the doctrine of the Trinity); 7=T (major reformers like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, and Cranmer explicitly affirmed the theology of the first four councils); 8=T (rationalists like Servetus and Socinus rejected the Trinity); 9=F (the deity of Christ was soundly rejected by enlightenment critics along with the doctrines of the Trinity, the authority of Scripture, and other foundational Christian truths); 10=F (the opposite of this is true; many departed from Trinitarian theism to embrace atheism, agnosticism, and deism)

① Facts to Never Forget

① ③	To Read	“Facts to Never Forget” (pp. 186–196)
②	To Study	Chart of the five “Classic Arguments for God’s Existence” (p. 189)
③	To Memorize	Chart of the “Eight Facts to Never Forget” (p. 195)
	To Do	Drawing on your study of “Classic Arguments for God’s Existence” (p. 189), explain how each of the arguments draw from the “Eight Facts to Never Forget” (pp. 189–196).

Fact 1: Everyone has ideas about “God” (p. 187).

- ① ❖ What are some of the false ideas about God you encounter most frequently?

Fact 2: The Christian God is both infinite and personal (p. 188).

- ① ❖ What does it mean that God is both transcendent and immanent (p. 188)? How does this understanding of God differ from the views of other religions?

Fact 3: Evidence and arguments point to God’s existence (pp. 188–190).

- ① ❖ What are the classic arguments for God’s existence (p. 189)? If they are reasonable arguments, why do people still disbelieve in God’s existence (pp. 189–190)?

Fact 4: Jesus Christ is God incarnate, the absolute revelation of God (pp. 190–191).

- ① ❖ How does the incarnation of God the Son reveal God in a profound way (pp. 190–191)?

Fact 5: Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one person (pp. 191–192).

- ① ❖ Describe in your own words how Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man (p. 191).

Fact 6: As God-Man, Jesus is our complete Savior (pp. 192–194).

- ① ❖ Describe some consequences of denying either Jesus’s full humanity or full deity. Specifically, how does a defective Christology affect salvation (p. 193)?

Fact 7: The Spirit is fully, distinctly, and personally God (pp. 194–195).

- ① ❖ What are some of the primary activities of the Holy Spirit that demonstrate His divinity (p. 194)?

Fact 8: The Holy Trinity is truth we can believe and trust (pp. 195–196).

- ① ❖ How does the “distinctions in unity” of the Triune God perfectly exemplify loving relationships (pp. 195–196)?

③ Discuss with your group or mentor which of the “Facts to Never Forget” were most insightful for you personally. Why?

① Dangers to Avoid

①	To Read	“Dangers to Avoid” (pp. 197–211).
②	To Study	The ten “Dangers to Avoid,” taking note of any dangers that are particularly troubling in your cultural context and area of Christian service (pp. 197–211).
③	To Memorize	Charts of the Trinity (p. 203), Christology (p. 209), and “Ten Dangers to Avoid” (p. 211).
③	To Do	While going through “Voices from the Past and Present” (pp. 221–241), recognize and list where the authors identify one or more of the ten “Dangers to Avoid.”

Danger 1: Deceptive God-Talk (pp. 198–199)

- ① ❖ What is “God-Talk,” and why is it so dangerous?
- ③ ❖ How did Friedrich Schleiermacher, Adolf von Harnack, and other recent theologians engage in deceptive “God-talk” (pp. 198–199)? Why is a proper understanding of biblical theological terms important?

Danger 2: Kidnapped and Tortured Verses (pp. 199–200)

- ① ❖ What four passages of Scripture are used as examples of “kidnapped and tortured verses” (pp. 199–200)? How do we properly understand these passages?

Danger 3: Single-Attribute Exaggeration (pp. 200–201)

- ① ❖ What is meant by the doctrine of God's simplicity (p. 200)?
- ② ❖ Which attributes of God have you tended to over-emphasize or exaggerate? Which have you neglected or downplayed? How can this distort our understanding of the true God?

Danger 4: The Incredible Shrinking god (pp. 201–202)

- ① ❖ While some shrink their view of God, many Christians who intellectually acknowledge His greatness fail to acknowledge Him in their actions. What are some ways in which your actions fail to acknowledge the greatness of God?

Danger 5: Holy Triplets (Tritheism) (pp. 202–203)

- ① ❖ Using the chart on page 203, what are the three truths-in-tension that balance an orthodox understanding of the Trinity? What are the three errors that can occur when one of these truths is neglected?
- ② ❖ How does the Mormon religion deviate from the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (pp. 202–203)?

Danger 6: One Person, Three Names (p. 203–205)

① ❖ What are the four important facets of divine equality (p. 204)? What do each of these mean?

③ ❖ Define the heresy of “modalism,” and give examples of modalistic language concerning the Trinity. What is a modern example of modalism (pp. 203–205).

Danger 7: Little God, Junior, and His Pet Birdy (Subordinationism) (pp. 205–206)

① ❖ What does subordinationism claim about the nature of Christ (pp. 205–206)? How does orthodoxy differ from this error?

① ❖ What is a modern example of subordinationism (p. 205)?

Danger 8: Pretzelizing, Egging, and Watering Down the Divine (pp. 206–208)

① ❖ What are the four common pitfalls in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity (p. 207)? Which common analogies tend to fall into these pits?

Danger 9: Driving Christology Into a Ditch (pp. 208–209)

- ① ❖ What are the two ditches described in the section (pp. 208–209)? How does the classic language of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 431) avoid these ditches (p. 209)?

Danger 10: God *or* Man, but Not the God-Man (pp. 209–211)

- ① ❖ Why is it vital that we understand Jesus as not only fully divine, but also fully human (pp. 209–211)?

- ③ In your group or with your mentor, discuss what you believe to be the most pressing “Dangers to Avoid” presently threatening believers in your church. How could these be addressed in your own local ministry context?

① Principles to Put Into Practice

①	To Read	“Principles to Put into Practice” (pp. 212–220).
②	To Study	The “Seven Principles,” making note of areas where personal growth is needed; the chart, “The Gospel in Trinitarian Perspective” (p. 213).
③	To Memorize	The chart, “Seven Principles to Put into Practice” (p. 220).
③	To Do	Place the “Principles to Put into Practice” in order from “most applicable” (marked #1) to “least applicable” (marked #7), taking into consideration your current personal need for practical growth in these areas.

Principle 1: Knowing God encourages us to learn more of God (pp. 212–214).

- ① ❖ How is life with a spouse after a wedding similar to life with God after conversion (pp. 212–213)?

- ② ❖ How has your understanding of the nature and character of the Triune God affected how you think differently about Him or act differently toward Him?

Principle 2: In light of the Trinity, be all you were meant to be (pp. 214–214)

- ① ❖ How is personhood an important part of Christian theology (p. 214)?

- ③ ❖ Describe the implications of humanity being created in the image of God. What similarities are there between God and His image bearers? What are the differences?

Principle 3: Learn to parent from the perfect Father (pp. 215–216)

- ① ❖ What does it mean that God is the archetypal “father” (p. 215)? What characteristics of God are especially fitting for parents to imitate?

Principle 4: Follow Jesus, our Lord and Brother (pp. 216–217)

- ① ❖ What specifically are we called to do in our imitation of Christ (p. 217)?

Principle 5: Trust the Holy Spirit (pp. 217–218)

- ① ❖ What does it mean that the Holy Spirit sanctifies Christians (p. 218)? How is faith a vital part of this work of the Spirit?

Principle 6: Be kind but firm with deceivers and the deceived (pp. 218–219).

- ① ❖ What two passages of Scripture clearly teach how Christians are to handle opponents of the faith (p. 219)? Summarize their instruction in your own words.

Principle 7: Glorify the triune God (pp. 219–220).

- ① ❖ Reread Ephesians 1:16–23 and note all the reasons Paul gave for glorifying God (p. 219).

③ Share with your mentor or group the top three principles you need to personally put into practice in your own life. Conclude your study by praying that God would transform your hearts and minds by the power of the Spirit in conformity with the Son, Jesus Christ.

③ Quiz 8: Facts, Dangers, and Principles Review

1. The classic arguments for God's existence _____.
 - a. Are no longer valid in the modern, scientific age.
 - b. Absolutely prove His existence.
 - c. Are true because God exists.
2. God is both infinite and _____.
 - a. Finite.
 - b. Personal.
 - c. Impersonal.
 - d. Contingent.
3. Scripture teaches that we should be _____ but firm with deceivers and the deceived.
 - a. Kind.
 - b. Truthful.
 - c. Combative.
4. The classic language of the Council of Chalcedon states that Jesus is "one and only Christ—Son, Lord, only-begotten in two natures without _____."
 - a. Union.
 - b. Incarnation.
 - C. Segregation.
 - D. Confusion.
5. Jesus Christ is God _____, the absolute revelation of God.
 - a. Incarnate.
 - b. Emanated.
 - c. Breathed out.
6. Equal Ontology means that _____.
 - a. Each person has the identical divine nature.
 - b. Each person refers to "I" and "Me".
 - c. Each person has an "I/You" relationship with the others.
 - d. Each person indwells the others.
7. _____ denies unity of the Trinity and departs from historic Christian orthodoxy.
 - a. Modalism
 - b. Eutychianism
 - c. Tritheism
8. _____ held to subordinationism and was condemned by the leaders of Nicaea.
 - a. Pelagius.
 - b. Arius.
 - c. Joseph Smith.
 - d. Nikolas of Myra.
9. Humanity was created _____.
 - a. Unchangeably evil apart from the grace of God.
 - b. In the Image of God.
 - c. According to the likeness of the angels.

*I want to understand Your truth,
which my heart believes in and loves.
I do not seek to understand in order to believe,
but rather I believe in order to understand.*

Anselm of Canterbury