

# Christian Ministry Unit 1

## Introduction to Theology

### Week 1 – Theology Proper

#### Introduction

“Theology” refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

“Theology Proper” refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Why do we need an accurate view of God?

Psalm 16<sup>1</sup> Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You. <sup>2</sup> I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no good besides You.” <sup>3</sup> As for the saints who are in the earth, They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. <sup>4</sup> The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips. <sup>5</sup> The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. <sup>6</sup> The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. <sup>7</sup> I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. <sup>8</sup> I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. <sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. <sup>10</sup> For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. <sup>11</sup> You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

In Ps. 16, David gives three reasons why he prizes accurate knowledge about God:

- Because understanding and appreciating what God is like helps us to worship Him with awe and joy.

Psalm 16<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices . . . <sup>11</sup> You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

In Ps. 146, the Psalmist reminds himself to keep praising God throughout his life.

Why?

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! <sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being . . . <sup>5</sup> How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God, <sup>6</sup> Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever; <sup>7</sup> Who executes justice for the oppressed; Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free.

Moses asks God to see his glory (Ex. 33:18)—his magnificence. Ex. 34:6-8\*\*

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup> who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” <sup>8</sup> Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.

- Because there are many harmful distortions of God.

Psalm 16<sup>4</sup> The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

1 John 5<sup>21</sup> Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Rom. 1:18-32 . . . <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. <sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. <sup>25</sup> For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever . . .

- Because God’s character is the only true foundation of our lives, Who provides stability in the midst of life’s changes and sorrows.

Psalm 16<sup>1</sup> Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You . . . <sup>8</sup> I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Psalm 46<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea . . .

## How do we learn about God?

How can we find accurate information about who God is and what he is like? There are only two options:

- SPECULATION:

EXAMPLE:

- REVELATION:

GENERAL REVELATION:

SPECIAL REVELATION:

General Revelation	Special Revelation

- **What can be known from general revelation?**

Romans 1: . . . <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Rom. 1:19, 20 says that from creation, we know that God is:

- 
- 
- 

Romans 2:<sup>14</sup> For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup> in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them

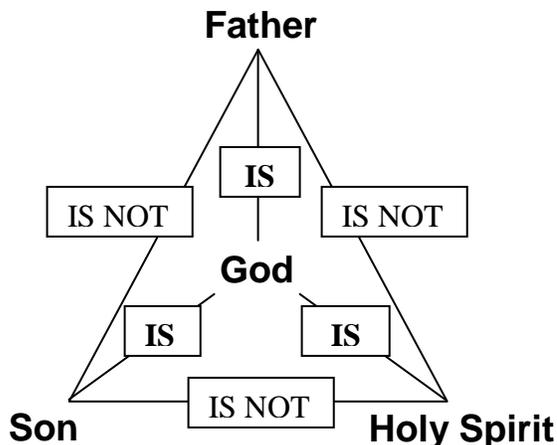
- 

**Note:** *General revelation contradicts many of the central tenets of other religions.*

**Note:** Christians disagree whether general revelation is sufficient for a saving knowledge of God.

## The unity & diversity of God

The Bible reveals that God is a Community of three Persons. These Persons are distinct from one another (diversity), yet share the same essential attributes, purpose and love for one another (unity). Christians refer to this “tri-unity” as the Trinity.



- Many biblical passages teach the unity and diversity of God:

#### UNITY:

Deut. 6: <sup>4</sup>“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

Isaiah 45: <sup>5</sup>“I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God.”

#### DIVERSITY:

##### Old Testament:

Gen. 1:26,27\*\* <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 2: <sup>24</sup> For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Isaiah 48: <sup>12</sup> “Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. <sup>13</sup> “Surely My hand founded the earth, And My right hand spread out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand together. <sup>14</sup> “Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he will carry out His good pleasure on Babylon, And His arm *will be against* the Chaldeans. <sup>15</sup> “I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him, I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful. <sup>16</sup> “Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

##### New Testament:

Matthew 28: <sup>19</sup> “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

- Why is the Trinity important?

*The Trinity resolves the tension between God’s love and His self-existence.*

John 17: <sup>5</sup> “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was . . . <sup>22</sup> “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one . . .

*The Trinity provides the ultimate basis for valuing personal love relationships.*

*The Trinity provides the ultimate basis for unity and diversity in human community.*

## **The Attributes of God**

“Attributes” means “characteristics.”

Common

Unique

- **Loving** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God always views humanity with compassion and acts for its best interest.<sup>1</sup>

### **Scriptural Evidence:**

1 Jn. 4<sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love . . .<sup>16</sup> We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

(Isaiah 30:18-21;49:14-16)

### **Applications:**

The reason God loves us lies wholly within God and is not because of anything within us.

1 Jn. 4<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Rom. 5<sup>6</sup> For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.<sup>7</sup> For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

---

<sup>1</sup> God’s love does not erase his other attributes—such as his righteousness and justice. Because God is loving, he satisfies the demands of his righteousness through Jesus’ death on the cross—so that he can remain just, yet justify sinful people who believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

As God's children, His discipline is always an expression of His love, and never retributive.

Heb. 12 <sup>6</sup> FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." <sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? . . . <sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Because God is loving, His will is always the absolute best for our lives.

Rom. 12 <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect.

- **Righteous** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God is the essence of moral goodness.

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Mark 10: <sup>18</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

(Job 34:10; Hab. 1:13)

**Applications:**

How God views us in Christ:

2 Cor. 5 <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Toward what goal God's Spirit is transforming our characters:

Rom. 14 <sup>17</sup> . . . for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in (by means of) the Holy Spirit.

1 Thess. 3 <sup>12</sup> and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; <sup>13</sup> so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

- **Just** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God does what his righteousness demands (reward, punishment, deliverance).

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Rom. 2: <sup>1</sup> Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same

things.<sup>2</sup> And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.<sup>3</sup> But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?<sup>4</sup> Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?<sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

(Gen. 18:25; Ps. 19:9)

### **Applications:**

We should never ask God: “Give me what I deserve!”

Rom. 3<sup>23</sup> . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus . . .

Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, God acts justly when He forgives our ongoing sins.

1 Jn. 1<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness . . .<sup>2:1</sup> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;<sup>2</sup> and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

To take revenge in inter-personal relationships is to usurp God's role as Judge.

Rom. 12<sup>17</sup> Never pay back evil for evil to anyone . . .<sup>19</sup> Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.

- **Omniscient** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God knows all things actual or possible.

### **Scriptural Evidence:**

Ps. 147<sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.

(Isa. 40:28)

### **Applications:**

We cannot hide our sins from God. Yet because of God’s grace, we do not need to be afraid of His exposure.

Heb. 4 <sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do . . .  
<sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

If we ask God, He can show us our “hurtful ways” as we need to see them.

Ps. 139 <sup>23</sup> Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; <sup>24</sup> And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

- **Omnipresent** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God transcends all limits of space and time.

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Ps. 139: <sup>7</sup> Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, <sup>10</sup> Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

**Applications:**

God is not confined to a “sanctuary;” we can worship Him anywhere and anytime.

Jn. 4 <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father . . . <sup>23</sup> “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

Jesus is present and involved in every aspect of our lives. Therefore, we can and should represent Him in whatever we do and say.

Col. 3 <sup>17</sup> Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

- **Omnipotent** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God can do whatever he wants to do as long as it is consistent with His character.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> God cannot do things that are logically impossible (e.g. make a square circle), violate his own character (e.g. act cruelly, fail to do what he has promised, etc.), or undo the past (though he may release us from its consequences and even the memory of it).

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Jeremiah 32 <sup>17</sup> ‘Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.

(“El Shaddai” means “Almighty God”)

**Applications:**

Even though we are sinful, God is powerful enough to transform us if we entrust ourselves to Jesus.

Rom. 8 <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death . . . <sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Even though we are weak, God’s power through Jesus is able to advance His redemptive purpose through us.

Phil. 4 <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Even though Satan is far more powerful than we are, God is far more powerful than Satan—and God is in us.

1 Jn. 4 <sup>4</sup> You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

- **Sovereign** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God owns, rules, and sustains the creation. No one and nothing can thwart Him from ultimately accomplishing His purposes.

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Psalms 24:<sup>1</sup> ...The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. <sup>2</sup> For He has founded it upon the seas And established it upon the rivers.

(Gen. 14:19; Acts 17:24-28)

**Applications:**

God rightfully owns our lives—both because He created us and because He has redeemed us through Jesus

1 Cor. 6<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

God can work through His enemies' opposition to accomplish His will (e.g., the Cross). Because we are now God's children, He is able to work through all things to advance His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

Gen. 50<sup>20</sup> "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

God's purpose will prevail—He will re-establish His loving rule through Jesus.

Eph. 1<sup>10</sup> And this is the plan: At the right time He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.<sup>11</sup> . . . and He makes everything work out according to His plan.

- **Immutable** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God doesn't change with regard to His attributes or promises.<sup>3</sup>

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Heb. 13:<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

(James 1:17; 1 Sam. 15:29)

**Applications:**

God's promises are always true no matter how we feel (e.g., Rom. 8:1).

Unlike people, who are undependable in spite of their best intentions, God's character is utterly dependable (Psalms: "God is my Rock").

Heb. 13<sup>5</sup> . . . He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"<sup>6</sup> so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" . . .<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

- **Veracity** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God is completely truthful and faithful.

---

<sup>3</sup> God does changes in his emotional reactions. He also introduces changes in his redemptive program.

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Heb. 6: <sup>18</sup> . . . so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

(Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; 2 Tim 2:13)

**Applications:**

God's Word always tells the truth.

Jn. 17 <sup>17</sup> "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

God's faithfulness is more foundational than our faithfulness to God.

2 Tim. 2 <sup>13</sup> If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- **Self-Existent** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God is totally independent—the only non-contingent Being in the universe.

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Ex. 3: <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

(Jn. 8:58; Isa. 40:28; Acts 17:25)

**Applications:**

The essence of sin is to assert your independence from God.

Gen. 3 <sup>5</sup> (Satan said) "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

God does not need us to accomplish His will. Rather, through His grace He gives us the privilege of collaborating with Him in advancing His will.

1 Cor. 3 <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. <sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

Our prayers cannot manipulate God to do our will. But through prayer, we can collaborate with God to advance His will.

- **Infinite** (common or unique?)

**Definition:** God's attributes are free from all limitations.

**Scriptural Evidence:**

Ps. 90:<sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

**Applications:**

By virtue of His deity, Jesus was able to endure God's infinite wrath against our sin in a finite amount of time.

Heb. 10<sup>10</sup> By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . <sup>14</sup> For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Heaven will never be boring because we can never exhaust the depths of God's kindness or His wisdom.

Eph. 2<sup>7</sup> . . . so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 11<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

**Memory Verses**

**Ex. 34:6-8\*\*** - God's character is awesome and worthy of worship. God is both just and merciful in his dealings with humans.

**Gen. 1:26,27\*\*** - God exists as more than one Person.

**Assignment**

Phil. 2:1-13 (due next week)

1. In your own words, record each thing this passage (2:5-11) teaches about Jesus.
2. Explain how Paul applies these truths about Jesus to Christians' lives (2:1-4,12,13)?

The Church Visitation assignment (see handout) is due the 6<sup>th</sup> week of class if you are taking module 1 only or the 10<sup>th</sup> week of class if you are taking modules 1 and 2.