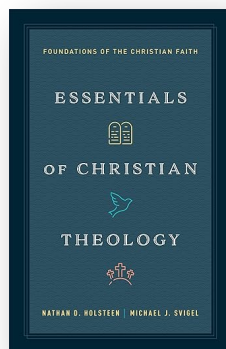


ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY FIELD GUIDE

Michael J. Svigel



***Essentials of Christian Theology* Field Guide**

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

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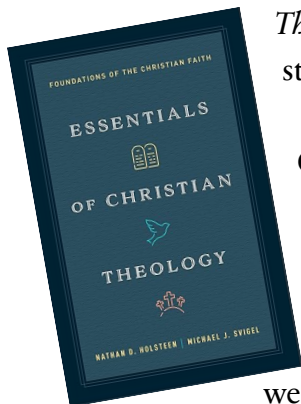
HOW TO USE THIS FIELD GUIDE

Before embarking on a trek through unfamiliar territory, you need a few essentials. Basics like proper footwear, clothing, and water are a good start. But for a long hike, you'll need gear for climbing, cooking, and camping. Travel companions are a must. And don't forget a GPS *and* (not *or*) an old-fashioned *compass and map*. Yes, *real* paper and *real* moving parts. Because if you get lost, you'll need to find your way before the battery on your device runs out!

Like a compass and map, *Essentials of Christian Theology: Foundations of the Christian Faith* provides the absolute basics. But like any tool, you need to know the best way to use that book to get the most out of your journey. That's where this Field Guide comes in handy.



Each of us starts this journey with a different degree of experience...and with different goals in mind. You might be involved in personal Bible study or one-on-one discipleship with a seasoned mentor. Or maybe you're part of a small group. Perhaps you're using *Essentials* as a textbook for ministry training. Some may even be reading this book for a pre-baptism, new member, or confirmation class. Or maybe you're working through it for leadership training or for formal ordination. However you're using *Essentials of Christian Theology*, this Field Guide will help you navigate that distance from where you're starting to where you want to go.



Before starting out, you'll need a few items to get the most out of this Field Guide. Of course, you'll need the *Essentials of Christian Theology* book—preferably a hard copy, because the questions and their page numbers correspond to that volume. And don't forget a Bible! Mark it up, highlight it, underline it, or bookmark it. And do the same with the *Essentials* book. This will help you interact with the Field Guide questions and discussions. Finally,

we strongly recommend working through the Field Guide with another person or as part of a group—especially in your local church.

Throughout your journey, never forget that God the Holy Spirit is your ultimate guide. Yes, He graciously provides pastors, teachers, and a community of faith to help. But without God working in our 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, begin with prayer, continue with praise, and always give God thanks for your progress!

INTRODUCTION

Mastering the Essentials of Christian Theology

TO READ	Introduction: Mastering the Essentials of Christian Theology (pp. 11–13)
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 not only to understand the concepts in this study but to be challenged and changed as a result of your reading, reflection, and discussion.

- ❖ What comes to mind when you hear the word “theology”? What about the word “doctrine”? How about “dogma”?
- ❖ Does the word “theology” draw your attention or drive you away? What previous experiences in your past might play a role in your reaction, either positive or negative.
- ❖ How do the authors define “theology” (pp. 11–12)? How is this similar to or different from the way you have understood theology?
- ❖ In what sense could we say, “Everyone is a theologian” (p. 12)?
- ❖ Why is theology important for the Christian life (pp. 11–13)?
- ❖ What specific biblical, theological, or practical questions do you hope to discuss in your study of the essentials of Christian theology?

PRELUDE

The Biblical Drama in Three Acts

TO READ	Prelude: The Biblical Drama in Three Acts (pp. 15–22)
TO STUDY	Chart: “God’s Story: From the Garden to Glory” (p. 17) in comparison to the chart, “A Typical Hero Cycle” (p. 16)
TO MEMORIZE	The “three acts” of the biblical story: Act I: Creation; Act II: Fall; Act III: Redemption (pp. 16–22); the theme of the Old Testament (p. 18); the theme of the New Testament (pp. 20–21)
TO DO	Reflect on (or discuss with your group) how some of your favorite books, films, or television shows reflect certain elements of the “Hero Cycle” (p. 16). Discuss some ways the elements of these stories parallel God’s story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption.

- ❖ Review the five bullet points on page 15. How have you personally experienced some of these things?
- ❖ What are the “Three Acts” of the Christian story (pp. 15–20)? What key events occur in each major movement (pp. 15–22)?
- ❖ In your own words, summarize the theme of the Old Testament (pp. 17–18).
- ❖ In your own words, summarize the theme of the New Testament (pp. 20–21).
- ❖ Who would you say are the villain(s), victim(s), and hero(es) of the Christian story? Into which of these categories do you fall? Why?
- ❖ Return to the first question regarding the five bullet points on page 15 that list common experiences of this fallen world. How can the Christian story address these universal struggles?

ONE

A FIRM FOUNDATION

God's Revealed Truth

TO READ	Chapter One: A Firm Foundation: God's Revealed Truth (pp. 23–62)
TO STUDY	Chart: “Inerrancy Inferred from Inspiration” (p. 25); Chart: “Basic Method of Christian Theology” (p. 26); Charts on pp. 34, 35, and 39 illustrating the wrong and right understanding of inspiration; “Snapshot of History” chart (pp. 61–62)
TO MEMORIZE	Deuteronomy 31:26; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 19:1–2; John 17:17; Romans 1:19–20; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Peter 1:20–21; 2 Peter 3:15–16
TO DO	Find out what your church or denomination teaches regarding the authority of Scripture as well as their view on other doctrinal standards like confessions, creeds, or doctrinal statements. If working with a mentor or in a group, discuss how these things work together as your church seeks to do God's will and carry out ministry.

In Short ...

- ❖ What are the various means by which God has revealed himself to humanity (p. 24)?
- ❖ Name three things that make God's revelation through Scripture unique (p. 25).
- ❖ Define “verbal plenary inspiration” (p. 25).
- ❖ In light of the principle of “faith seeking understanding” (p. 26), how would you explain to somebody a proper method for answering theological questions?

Passages to Ponder

- ❖ What can be known about God by his revelation through creation (pp. 27–29)?

- ❖ What are the two marks of a false prophet (p. 31)? What are some so-called “prophets” throughout history or even today who fall short of these standards?
- ❖ In light of the discussion on inspiration and inerrancy on pages 32–40, explain why the following statements fall short:
 - “Jesus’s words are God’s words, but the words of Paul are his opinion.”
 - “The Bible is completely true on spiritual matters, but it makes errors on non-spiritual matters.”
 - “God dictated every word, and humans just wrote down what they heard.”
 - “Inspiration and inerrancy are modern doctrines nobody ever taught in the early church or for most of church history.”
 - “The Spirit inspired the authors of Scripture, then they wrote down those revelations in their own words.”

**MENTOR / GROUP
DISCUSSION**

Is God’s revelation through creation sufficient to lead to salvation?
Why or why not?

- ❖ Regarding the canon of the Old and New Testaments (pp. 40–43), how would you explain why the 66 books of the Bible are included while other books are not?

Realities to Remember

- ❖ Which of the five “Realities to Remember” regarding God’s revelation do you think is most urgent to emphasize today (pp. 43–48)? Why?
- ❖ For each of the “Realities to Remember” (pp. 43–48), name one negative consequence of Christians neglecting or forgetting that vital truth.

Errors to Avoid

- ❖ Which of the five “Errors to Avoid” (pp. 48–53) have tripped you up personally?
- ❖ Which error do you see most frequently in your Christian circles?

Lessons to Live

- ❖ Select one of the “Lessons to Live” (pp. 53–61) that most convicted you personally.
- ❖ What specific decisions can you make or actions can you take to bring this lesson to life? For example, you may join a weekly Bible study, commit to a reading plan, take notes during the Sunday message, or even take steps toward more formal theological education.

Chapter One Review Quiz

- 1. 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 it’s completely true.
 - c. Scripture is simultaneously human and divine.

- 2. 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 one of many legitimate views among orthodox, protestant believers.

- 3. The classic method of doing Christian theology is:**
 - a. Reason seeking faith.
 - b. Reason and faith working together.
 - c. Faith seeking understanding.

- 4. Scripture is true in all it affirms 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.

- 5. The phrase “verbal, plenary inspiration” means:**
 - a. Only the words spoken by God, Jesus, or the Spirit in the Bible are 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.

TWO

GOD IN THREE PERSONS

The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

TO READ	Chapter Two: God in Three Persons—The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (pp. 63–107)
TO STUDY	Chart of the “Shield of the Trinity” indicating the relations of persons of the Trinity (p. 67); Chart regarding the right use of “nature” and “person” (p. 78); Chart: “Classic Arguments for God’s Existence” (p. 85); Chart indicating the three boundaries of Triunity and the three deviations from Triunity (p. 95); “Snapshot of History” chart (p. 107)
TO MEMORIZE	The bullet-pointed formulation of the Trinity (p. 66); the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed readily found online and/or the definition of the Trinity of Warfield (p. 63); Genesis 1:1–3; Genesis 1:26–27; Exodus 3:14; Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 139:7–10; Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1–3, 14, 18; John 14:16–17; John 15:26; Ephesians 1:3, 13; Philippians 2:6–11; Colossians 1:15–19; 1 John 4:13–16
TO DO	Using passages covered in this chapter, sketch your own “Shield of the Trinity” (p. 67) but add at least one Scripture reference that affirms each of the “IS” and “IS NOT” relationships. If working with a mentor or in a group, discuss your own church’s statement or confession regarding the Trinity and why this doctrine is important to Christian faith and life.

In Short ...

- ❖ How does the Christian view of God differ from atheism, pantheism, and other forms of theism (pp. 64–66)?
- ❖ In your own words, define the “Trinity” using classic theological language and avoiding terms that present inaccurate or misleading ideas of God and Christ (pp. 66–67).
- ❖ Do the same for the term “Incarnation,” describing the classic Christian doctrine of the person of Christ using tried-and-true language while avoiding problematic terminology (pp. 79–80).

Passages to Ponder

- ❖ Why has God revealed himself with so many different names (pp. 69–72)?
- ❖ In your own words, summarize how the Old Testament emphasis on the unity of God allows for further revelation of the Triunity of God (pp. 72–74).
- ❖ What is the significance of Scripture referring to God the Son as “the Word” in John 1 (pp. 76–78)? How would this have been understood by Jewish and Greek readers?
- ❖ In light of central passages regarding the incarnation of God the Son (Colossians 1:15–19; Philippians 2:6–11) (pp. 78–80), how would you reply to someone who claims the submission of Jesus to the Father’s will proves he’s not truly divine?
- ❖ In light of Scripture’s teaching regarding the Holy Spirit in John 14–17 and other passages (pp. 80–81), how would you respond to somebody who claims the Holy Spirit is just an impersonal active force?
- ❖ How does Matthew 28:19 affirm the Trinity (p. 82–83)?

MENTOR / GROUP DISCUSSION

It has been said regarding the doctrine of the Trinity: “Try to understand it, you lose your mind; try to deny it, you lose your soul.” Critique that statement. How important to the Christian faith and life is the Trinity? Why has this been regarded as an essential doctrine of the faith? How are other doctrines affected if somebody rejects the Trinity?

Realities to Remember

- ❖ Of the five “Realities to Remember” regarding the doctrine of the Trinity (pp. 83–89), which do you think is most important for churches to teach about today? Why?
- ❖ Which of the five “Realities to Remember” (pp. 83–89) encourages you most as a Christian? Why?

Errors to Avoid

- ❖ Which of the seven “Errors to Avoid” (pp. 89–98) have you personally encountered from uninformed Christians or false teachers? Based on what you learned in this chapter, how would you respond to these errors using the Bible?

Lessons to Live

- ❖ Considering the seven “Lessons to Live” (pp. 98–106), state three practical applications related to the Trinity.
- ❖ Are there any false beliefs or practices you will cease? What positive actions can you take in light of the “Lessons to Live” (pp. 98–106) regarding the doctrine of the Triune God?

Chapter Two Review Quiz

- 1. Which of the following best expresses the true Christian doctrine of the Trinity?**
 - a. The Father, Son, and Spirit are three parts of the Trinity.
 - b. The Father is God, the Son is the first created being, and the Spirit is an active force.
 - c. The Father, Son, and Spirit are of the same nature but distinct Persons.
- 2. Which passage most clearly affirms that the Son is God who took on true humanity?**
 - a. John 1:1–18
 - b. Ephesians 1:3–14
 - c. Matthew 28:19
- 3. The false view that teaches the Father, Son, and Spirit are all the same person is:**
 - a. Modalism
 - b. Arianism
 - c. Polytheism
- 4. The proper way to describe the person of Christ is:**
 - a. One person who is half God and half man.
 - b. One person who is fully divine and fully human.
 - c. Two persons, divine and human, occupying the same space.
- 5. Which of the following is NOT one of the classic arguments for God’s existence?**
 - a. The Cosmological Argument
 - b. The Moral Argument
 - c. The Methodological Argument

MENTOR / GROUP DISCUSSION

Using the “Snapshot of History” chart on page 107 and information in this chapter, how would you respond to the false claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was invented in the fourth century?

THREE

FASHIONED AND FALLEN

Humanity and Sin

TO READ	Chapter Three: Fashioned and Fallen—Humanity and Sin (pp. 109–151)
TO STUDY	Chart: “Humanity’s Unique Place in God’s Original Creation” (p. 118); Chart regarding the material and immaterial aspects of humanity (p. 121); Chart: “Three Views on the Origin of the Soul” (p. 122); Chart: “Five ‘Deaths’ Resulting from the Fall (p. 125); Chart: “Four Classic Views on Humanity and Sin” (p. 127); Chart: “Imputed and Inherited Sin Compared”; “Snapshot of History” chart (pp. 150–151)
TO MEMORIZE	Genesis 1:26–28; Genesis 1:31; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:17–19; Romans 3:10–12; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12; Galatians 5:19–21; Colossians 1:16; James 3:8–9
TO DO	Given the spectrum of views on humanity and sin described in the chart on p. 127, discuss with your mentor or group where your own church falls regarding their official position, and what are considered allowable differing perspectives.

In Short ...

- ❖ Despite differences of opinion on details, what are the essential truths of the Christian faith regarding creation that Christians have always held (pp. 110–111)?
- ❖ Define the phrase “image of God” (*imago dei*) (p. 111).
- ❖ What are the negative consequences of abandoning the Bible’s teaching regarding humanity as the crowning work of God’s creation (pp. 111–112)?
- ❖ In light of the brief overview on pages 112–113, try to answer the common question, “Where did evil come from?”
- ❖ In one sentence, summarize the “bad news” of the Christian story (pp. 112–115).

Passages to Ponder

- ❖ Name at least three essential truths of the Christian faith established in Genesis 1–2 (pp. 116–117)? What happens to society when these foundational truths are forgotten?

MENTOR / GROUP DISCUSSION

In light of the far-reaching implications of the Christian doctrine of creation, why do you think some people find atheism attractive? What is gained by embracing atheism? What is lost?

- ❖ What are three views for what it means to be created in the image of God in Genesis 1:26–28 (pp. 117–119)? How would you reply to somebody who claims the image of God was completely lost in the fall (pp. 119–120)?
- ❖ What are some dangers in too radically separating the material and immaterial (body and soul) aspects of a human person? What are some dangers in denying that humans have an immaterial part that continues after death?
- ❖ The narrative in Genesis 3 lays the foundation for numerous negative consequences of the fall (pp. 124–125), including various experiences of “death” (p. 125). Which of these effects of the fall has impacted you the most severely and caused the most pain personally?

Realities to Remember

- ❖ Review the five “Realities to Remember” one by one (pp. 131–136) and name one negative consequence of neglecting or rejecting for each of these.
- ❖ Take another look at your answer to the question, “Where did evil come from?” How would you answer this differently or more fully in light of Reality 5 (pp. 135–136)?

Errors to Avoid

- ❖ Which of the five “Errors to Avoid” (pp. 137–144) do you see most frequently in your Christian circles? How could that error affect other doctrines and practices?
- ❖ Which of the “Errors to Avoid” (pp. 137–144) do you think is most strongly promoted in non-Christian circles? Why do you think this is?

Lessons to Live

- ❖ Select one of the four “Lessons to Live” (pp. 144–150), then consider something you can do this week that will apply this lesson to your life.

Chapter Three Review Quiz

- 1. Which of these is NOT true about the Bible’s teaching on the “image of God”?**
 - a. All humans—male and female—are created according to the image of God.
 - b. Only Genesis 1 mentions the “image of God” in the Bible.
 - c. The “image of God” is somehow related to humanity’s mission to exercise dominion.
- 2. Which of the following represents the view of humanity believed by most Christians?**
 - a. Humans are the highest of the animal kingdom, with only a material part.
 - b. Humans have both material and immaterial aspects, both created by God.
 - c. Humans are spiritual, angel-like, semi-divine beings trapped in a physical body.
- 3. Which of the following is NOT a result of the fall described in Genesis 3?**
 - a. Broken fellowship between God and humanity.
 - b. The introduction of death to humanity.
 - c. A closer step toward humans realizing their divinity as they were illuminated.
- 4. The doctrine of “total depravity” states that:**
 - a. The fall of humanity and their ruin before God is total, so all stand before God with an absolute need for grace.
 - b. The fall of Adam and Eve was total because of their privileged position, but since that time, each human is innocent and experiences his or her own fall.
 - c. Human nature itself is completely evil, and every individual only says and does evil; so, the only way to be saved from depravity is to escape this physical body and world forever.
- 5. The classic response to the problem of evil is:**
 - a. God created all things good, but evil came through creatures exercising free will.
 - b. God is the creator of all things, visible and invisible, so God directly created evil.
 - c. Good and evil are both eternal; you can’t have good without evil or evil without good.

FOUR

SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

God’s Rescue of Sinners

TO READ	Chapter Four: Saved by Grace Through Faith—God’s Rescue of Sinners (pp. 153—195)
TO STUDY	Chart: “The Gospel of the Person and Work of Christ” (p. 159); Chart: “Variety of Views on a Believer’s Security” (p. 167); Chart: “The Work of the Spirit and Salvation” (p. 177); “Snapshot of History” chart (p. 195)
TO MEMORIZE	Genesis 15:6; Isaiah 53:5–6; Matthew 20:28; Matthew 28:18–20; Romans 1:16–17; Romans 8:1; Romans 9:14–16; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8–10; Hebrews 10:19–22; James 2:26; 1 Peter 1:3–5
TO DO	Consult your church’s confession or doctrinal statement to discover where they stand on the following issues: predestination/election, eternal security (see chart on p. 167), and the work of the Spirit in salvation (see chart on p. 177). Find out how firmly these doctrines are held and how much room is allowed for differing perspectives.

In Short ...

- ❖ What is the “bad news” about humanity that the “good news” of the gospel directly addressed (pp. 153–154)?
- ❖ What does it mean that sinners are saved “by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone” (pp. 155–156)? On a scale of 1–10, with 10 being most important, how important is this doctrine? Why?
- ❖ What does the Bible mean by “salvation” beyond just the eternal salvation of a person’s soul (pp. 156–157)?
- ❖ If a person asks you, “What must I do to be saved?” how would you answer in light of the definition of the gospel of the person and work of Christ (pp. 157–159)?

Passages to Ponder

- ❖ According to Genesis 15:6 and its use in the New Testament, how were Old Testament saints saved prior to Christ’s coming (pp. 160–162)?
- ❖ What passages of Scripture would you use to counter the statement, “If I really love God, do enough good works, and don’t commit any really bad sins, I’ll go to heaven when I die” (pp. 165–168, 170–174)?
- ❖ Read Romans 8 out loud and underline specific promises that encourage you as a believer in Christ. What can separate you from God’s love for if you are in Christ?
- ❖ What is the relationship between grace, faith, and good works in salvation, according to Ephesians 2:8–10 (pp. 173–174)? Why is this relationship so important to understand?

Realities to Remember

- ❖ Of the five “Realities to Remember” regarding salvation (pp. 175–180), which is most misunderstood, neglected, or even rejected among Christians today?
- ❖ Why do you think people have such a hard time believing salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone?

Errors to Avoid

- ❖ What are the two errors regarding “good works” as they relate to salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (pp. 180–183)? Why are these errors so dangerous?
- ❖ Which of the six “Errors to Avoid” (pp. 180–187) do you sense is most prevalent in churches today?

MENTOR / GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss how your church or denomination views Calvinism, Arminianism, and their associated doctrines (like predestination, eternal security, etc.). How does this perspective affect how you engage in evangelism, missions, and proclaiming the gospel in church.

Lessons to Live

- ❖ If you have never trusted in Christ alone for salvation, do so now (pp. 188–189). If you know Christ, pray for opportunities to share the gospel with those who don't. What has prevented you from doing so in the past?
- ❖ To whom can you extend love, grace, and mercy as a fruit of the salvation that God has shown to you (pp. 189–190, 192–193)?

Chapter Four Review Quiz

- 1. Which of the following best summarizes the gospel?**
 - a. Jesus, who is God and man, died for our sins and rose from the dead.
 - b. Love God, love others, and do good, and you will be saved.
 - c. To be saved, believe in God and obey the Ten Commandments.

- 2. Which of the following teaches salvation by grace through faith?**
 - a. John 1:1–3
 - b. Ephesians 2:8–9
 - c. Galatians 5:22–23

- 3. How many ways of salvation are there?**
 - a. There are many ways to be saved, but salvation through Christ is easiest.
 - b. There are two ways of salvation: living a perfect life or depending on Jesus Christ.
 - c. There is one way of salvation: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

- 4. Which of the following is the best definition of “grace”?**
 - a. God coming to our aid to help us after we have done our best
 - b. Undeserved blessing, which is always free, never earned, and can never be repaid
 - c. A life-giving force God dispenses through things like baptism and communion

- 5. What is the best explanation of the atoning work of Christ?**
 - a. Christ died as an example for us to live sacrificial lives for others.
 - b. Christ died to pay a ransom to the devil, to free us from Satan's power.
 - c. Christ died in our place as a substitute for us, the righteous for the unrighteous.

FIVE

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The Church as the Growing Family of God

TO READ	Chapter Five: The Communion of Saints—The Church as the Growing Family of God (pp. 197–237)
TO STUDY	Chart: “Number of Sacraments Throughout History” (p. 211); Chart: “Who’s Responsible for Sanctification?” (p. 217); Chart: “Three Historical Models of Church Order (p. 233); “Snapshot of History” chart (p. 237)
TO MEMORIZE	Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:4–5; Acts 2:38–42; Romans 6:12–14; Romans 7:22–23; Romans 11:19–21; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; 1 Corinthians 12:4–7; Galatians 5:22–23; Galatians 6:15–16; Ephesians 2:19–21; Ephesians 4:20–24; Philippians 3:20–21; 1 Peter 2:5, 9
TO DO	Do some research to find out your church’s or denomination’s approach to leadership; that is, which of the three historical models of church order on page 233 does your church hold? Who would be responsible for making final decisions on matters like the order of worship, ministry partnerships, or the appointment of new leaders? Discover what your church believes about baptism and communion (or “the Lord’s Supper” or “the Eucharist”). Who can be baptized—infants, small children, teenagers, or adults? And what is the meaning of the Lord’s Supper?

In Short ...

- ❖ What is the starting point and center point of the church and the spiritual life (pp. 198–199)?
- ❖ What is the role of the Holy Spirit in both the church and spiritual growth (pp. 199–200)?
- ❖ Define the following terms: “visible church”; “invisible church”; “local church” (pp. 199–200).
- ❖ What is the role of the church in spiritual growth (pp. 200–201)?

Passages to Ponder

- ❖ How would you summarize the Bible’s basic teachings concerning the relationship between spiritual gifts, the church, and spiritual growth (pp. 204–207)? How does the idea of the “priesthood of believers” factor into this discussion?
- ❖ Regarding baptism, on what issues do all Christians agree, and about what issues do Christians tend to disagree (pp. 208–210)? Where does your own church land on these matters of common disagreement?
- ❖ What are the various perspectives on communion over which churches and denominations differ (pp. 210–211)? What is your own church’s perspective on these matters?
- ❖ Review passages related to the Christian’s experience of sin and holiness like Romans 6, Romans 7, and Galatians 5 (pp. 212–217). In light of these, evaluate the following statement: “When I do bad, I am to be blamed; when I do good, God is to be praised.” What about this statement rings true? What seems inaccurate? Defend your answer with specific biblical assertions.

MENTOR / GROUP DISCUSSION

Christians differ on when God established the church (see p. 204) and how the Old Testament people of Israel fit into the equation. Discuss where your own church and its leaders land on this issue. How does this affect your view of the church and the Christian life?

Realities to Remember

- ❖ Of the five “Realities to Remember” regarding the church and spiritual growth (pp. 217–222), which do you think is most neglected today? What examples do you have for this opinion?
- ❖ Why is the church essential for balanced spiritual growth (pp. 221–222)?

Errors to Avoid

- ❖ Which of the six “Errors to Avoid” (pp. 222–229) have you encountered most often in your circle of Christians? Why do you think this is?
- ❖ Which have you personally struggled with most recently? What were the consequences?

Lessons to Live

- ❖ The doctrines of the church and spiritual life are among the most practical. Which one of the five “Lessons to Live” (pp. 229–236) do you feel most applies to your current relationship with the church or walk with the Lord?
- ❖ What specific positive action will you start (or negative action will you stop) in light of your answer to the previous question?

Chapter One Review Quiz

- 1. Which of the following is a visible expression of an authentic local church?**
 - a. The believer’s personal relationship with Jesus.
 - b. The ordinances like baptism and communion.
 - c. The word “Christian” or “Church” in its name.

- 2. Which of the following statements regarding sanctification is NOT true?**
 - a. Authentic sanctification flows out of genuine justification.
 - b. Sanctification is not *me*-oriented but *we*-oriented.
 - c. Sanctification is accomplished through good works, leading to justification.

- 3. God gave spiritual gifts to all members of the church for what reason?**
 - a. To build up one another toward Christlikeness by the power of the Spirit.
 - b. To provide purpose and meaning to individuals exercising their gifts.
 - c. To demonstrate to everyone that a person is truly saved.

- 4. Which form of church order affirms that authority rests in a plurality of elders?**
 - a. Presbyterian
 - b. Episcopal
 - c. Congregational

- 5. On which of the following do all Protestant Christians agree?**
 - a. Every church should have a bishop, elders, deacons, and deaconesses.
 - b. Water baptism and Communion (the Lord’s Supper) are to be practiced today.
 - c. The church started at Pentecost and is completely distinct from Israel.

SIX

THE WORLD TO COME

Future Things and Eternal Hope

TO READ	Chapter Six: The World to Come—Future Things and Eternal Hope (pp. 239–284)
TO STUDY	Chart: “False Sources of Hope / True Sources of Hope” (p. 241); Chart: “Present Reality Versus Future Hope in 2 Corinthians 5” (p. 250); Charts on various views on the rapture (pp. 260–263); Charts on various views on the millennium (pp. 267–268); “Snapshot of History” chart (p. 284)
TO MEMORIZE	Isaiah 65:17; Jeremiah 31:33–34; Ezekiel 37:26–27; Daniel 12:2–3; Joel 2:30–32; Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7–9; Romans 8:18–23; 1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 2:7–8; 2 Peter 3:13–14; Revelation 21:1–5
TO DO	Read your church’s doctrinal statement or denomination’s confession of faith to see where they land on issues like the coming judgment, the millennium, and the rapture. Some churches only mention big picture eschatology like the return of Christ, resurrection of the body, and the restoration of creation. You may need to ask your church leadership whether the church has a more detailed position on these matters.

In Short ...

❖ How does hope in God’s promises for the future have healing and motivating power for us today (pp. 240–242)?

MENTOR / GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss how false sources of hope in the chart on p. 241 lead to disappointment. Share some personal examples.

❖ What are the three big promises related to future things on which all Christians agree (pp. 242–245)?

❖ How does the Christian hope of resurrection differ from simply going to heaven when we die (pp. 243–244)?

❖ What does it mean that Jesus Christ *is* our hope (pp. 245–247)?

Passages to Ponder

- ❖ What does Scripture mean when it says we will one day have a “spiritual” body (pp. 248–250)? How does this truth differ from what some believe regarding Christian hope?
- ❖ What does Romans 8 teach concerning the destiny of all creation (pp. 250–251)? How does this differ from the common secular understanding of the fate of nature?
- ❖ What does the book of Daniel teach concerning the future of this present world system and its wicked rulers (pp. 254–257)? How should we view current world politics in light of these truths? How does Romans 13:1–3 provide some balance to this discussion?
- ❖ If you were to write a brief “job description” of the figure Scripture refers to as the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), the “beast” (Revelation 13:1–10), or the “antichrist” (1 John 2:18; 4:3), what seven things would you include (pp. 258–259)?
- ❖ What are the different views of the “rapture” among those who believe in a future tribulation period (pp. 259–263)?
- ❖ What are the different views of the “millennium” among Bible-believing Christians (pp. 265–269)?

Realities to Remember

- ❖ Which of the five “Realities to Remember” regarding future things (pp 269–273) you think is most misunderstood or de-emphasized in churches today? Why?
- ❖ Which of the “Realities to Remember” (pp. 269–273) did you find most informative?

Errors to Avoid

- ❖ Which of the four “Errors to Avoid” (pp. 274–278) have personally tripped you up?
- ❖ Which of these errors do you encounter most frequently in your Christian circles?

Lessons to Live

- ❖ Which of the five “Lessons to Live” (pp. 278–283) feels like it’s speaking directly to you?
- ❖ What specific steps will you take in your life to live out this lesson?

Chapter Six Review Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT a belief about future things shared by all true Christians?

- a. The future return of Christ as judge and king.
- b. The future rapture of the church before the tribulation.
- c. The future defeat of sin, suffering, death, and the devil.

2. According to the amillennial view:

- a. Revelation 20, which mentions the 1000 years, doesn’t really belong in the Bible.
- b. Revelation 20 will be fulfilled when Christ returns to reign on earth for 1000 years.
- c. Revelation 20 refers to the present age between Christ’s first and second comings.

3. Which of the following chapters clearly teaches the future restoration of creation?

- a. Romans 8
- b. Matthew 24
- c. Revelation 13

4. The most accurate description of the Christian view of resurrection is:

- a. Going to heaven to be with Jesus when we die.
- b. Being born again when we believe in Jesus.
- c. Being raised bodily, the righteous to glory, the wicked to just condemnation.

5. Which of the following is an example of a “heinous heresy” in eschatology?

- a. Rejecting a future, literal return of Christ in fulfillment of Revelation 19.
- b. Rejecting a future, literal antichrist in fulfillment of Revelation 13.
- c. Rejecting a future, literal earthly kingdom in fulfillment of Revelation 20.

CONCLUSION

Where Do You Go from Here?

TO READ	Conclusion: Where Do You Go from Here? (pp. 285–290)
TO STUDY	List of Systematic Theologies for Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced on pages 287–290.
TO DO	Check out the free online courses through the Dallas Theological Seminary Global Institute (courses.dts.edu).

- ❖ After working through this book, answer the first question from the Introduction again: What comes to mind when you hear the word “theology”? How has your perception of theology changed?
- ❖ How would you respond to the following statements?
 - “Theology is boring.”
 - “Theology is unnecessary.”
 - “Theology is impractical.”
 - “Theology is divisive.”
 - “Theology is dangerous.”
- ❖ In some sense, everybody is a theologian. Would you consider yourself a Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced student of theology (see pp. 287–288)?
- ❖ Depending on your answer to the previous question, select one book from the appropriate category to deepen your study of theology.
- ❖ With whom can you share *Essentials of Christian Theology*? Who would benefit from receiving it as a gift? With whom might you work through this book and Field Guide either one-on-one or as a group?

