



*FOUNDATIONAL
THEOLOGY*



WHO IS GOD?



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Why Theology Matters	2
Theological Approaches	3
Theological Weight	5
Week #1 – Sovereign Creator	6
• Big Idea #1 – God is Sovereign	
• Big Idea #2 – God is our Creator	
• Devotional #1 – God is Eternal	
• Devotional #2 – God is Extratemporal	
• Devotional #3 – God is Omnipotent	
• Devotional #4 – God is Omniscient	
• Devotional #5 – God is Omnipresent	
Week #2 – Transcendent Trinity	20
• Big Idea #1 – God is Transcendent	
• Big Idea #2 – God is Triune	
• Devotional #1 – Perichoresis	
• Devotional #2 – God is Holy	
• Devotional #3 – God is Incomprehensible	
• Devotional #4 – God is Immutable	
• Devotional #5 – God is Immanent	
Week #3 – Good and Loving Father	36
• Big Idea #1 – God is Good and Loving	
• Big Idea #2 – The Father	
• Devotional #1 – Goodness Comes from God	
• Devotional #2 – Love is Defined by God	
• Devotional #3 – God is Wise	
• Devotional #4 – God is Just	
• Devotional #5 – God is Faithful	
Week #4 – Incarnate Son	50
• Big Idea #1 – The Incarnation	
• Big Idea #2 – The Son	
• Devotional #1 – Hypostatic Union	
• Devotional #2 – Jesus’ Divinity	
• Devotional #3 – Jesus’ Humanity	
• Devotional #4 – The Christ	
• Devotional #5 – The Image of God	
Week #5 – Dwelling Spirit	64
• Big Idea #1 – To Dwell Within Us	
• Big Idea #2 – The Holy Spirit	
• Devotional #1 – Our Advocate	
• Devotional #2 – Regeneration	
• Devotional #3 – Christian Unity	
• Devotional #4 – Fruitfulness	
• Devotional #5 – Gift Giver	

WHY THEOLOGY MATTERS

Why does theology matter? What even is theology?

Theology is the study of God. In other words, your theology is what you believe about God. Everyone has some kind of theology, because everyone believes something about God. Whether you believe God is good or bad, that is theology. Whether you believe God is active or inactive, that is theology. Whether you believe God exists or is a fairy tale, that is theology.

We believe theology matters because God matters. In fact, we believe that there is nothing more important than God Himself! If God is of supreme importance, our belief and understanding of Him ought to be deeply important to us. When we say that God is of supreme importance, we don't just mean that He is a big deal. The supremacy of God means that He is at the center of every aspect of the universe. From existential questions like, "Why do we exist?" and "What is our purpose?", to practical matters such as "How should I treat my neighbor?" and "What work should I do?", all of life inevitably ties back to our God.

Theology matters because God matters... but theology is not only about God. As we grow in our understanding of who God is, we also grow in our understanding of God's creation, including ourselves! God cares about everyone and everything, so good theology always leads to practical applications. The more we understand God, the more we will understand ourselves, each other, and the rest of the world. Theology is not just head knowledge. Theology is a shaping force which influences everything that we do.

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What we believe impacts how we live.

All actions start with some kind of underlying belief. We are more than impulsive animals dictated by instinct. We are thinking creatures who operate from a system of beliefs formed by culture, experience, goals, values, etc. There is always a "Why?" underneath every action. And if God is the ultimate "Why?", we would do well to grow in our understanding of the most foundational aspect of reality.

THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES


If theology is the study of God, then theological approaches are the ways in which we learn about God. There have been four primary theological approaches within the Christian faith. These approaches are Systematic Theology, Biblical Theology, Historical Theology, and Practical Theology.

Systematic Theology is a systematic approach to theology which categorizes doctrine under various topics. If you have ever asked a question like “What is baptism?” or “What does the Bible say about marriage?” or “How should we worship?”, you have asked a systematic theology question. Systematic theology answers topical questions by taking every passage of Scripture related to that question and bringing them together under one umbrella. This approach connects with logical and rational personalities and is often used to teach people the specific beliefs of the Christian faith. This booklet is a systematic approach to theology!

Biblical Theology is a narrative and connective approach to theology which traces developing themes throughout the Scriptures. A biblical theology approach looks for connections from one passage of Scripture to another and often tries to approach the text with as little agenda or preconceived notions as possible. Biblical theology views the Bible as a diverse but unified collection of literary pieces which all work together to create one grand story centered on the person of Jesus. This approach connects well with people who are artistic or love stories and narratives.

Historical Theology is a study of how Christian beliefs have developed, changed, or remained the same over the last 2,000 years. Historical approaches to theology deeply care about how Christians in the past interpreted and understood Scripture. This view examines how different denominations have formed over time and how these Christian groups developed their theology. A person can utilize historical theology to help inform their own understanding of Scripture through examining commentaries, catechisms, and other resources which have developed throughout Christian history. This approach connects with people who love history and are interested in how Christians from different places, times, and cultures understood the Bible and practiced their faith in Jesus.

Practical Theology is the application of theological principles to the believer’s day-to-day life. Practical approaches to theology are always asking questions such as “Why does this matter?” and “How does this



impact my life?” Practical theology takes care to not only understand the Scriptures, but to also understand the current culture of the believer in order to see how the teachings of the Scriptures can be properly contextualized with each audience. Practical theology connects with people who are practically minded and desire a straightforward application to their daily lives.

These four approaches to theology work together to develop a cohesive and vibrant understanding of God for the believer. While a certain approach may appeal to one particular personality or another, each believer needs all four approaches in order to have a holistic formation in theology. These varied approaches to theology remind us of the importance of being unified with our brothers and sisters in Christ. God made us to be a diverse people with a wide variety of experiences, perspectives, and spiritual gifts. If one particular approach connects with you, seek to connect with other believers who may naturally connect with other approaches. Your brothers and sisters will help you have a fuller understanding of the Bible just as you will help them have a fuller understanding of the Bible!

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THEOLOGICAL WEIGHT

Not all doctrine carries the same amount of importance and impact to the life of the believer. While all theology matters and all theology has an impact on what we believe and how we live, different theologies have different degrees of “weight.” Christian beliefs can be divided into three categories based on the degree to which they impact the believer’s life. These categories are referred to as Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary doctrines.

Primary Issues consist of beliefs that are absolutely crucial to bring a Christian. These matters are essential to the good news of Jesus and are of such great importance that if one were to deny one of these beliefs, they could not be considered an orthodox believer. These beliefs have been held by every Christian group and denomination across the world over the last two thousand years with great unity and clarity. We often refer to these beliefs as “matters of salvation” or “core beliefs.” Some of these beliefs are the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the Trinity, and Jesus’ resurrection.

Secondary Issues consist of beliefs which, while not essential to the gospel, have a significant impact to the organization and practice of a local congregation and the life of the believer. These matters often make up the differences between denominations and various Christian traditions because they directly relate to the way in which local congregations operate. Because these beliefs have a large impact of the life and practice of a believer, they should not be dismissed, but because these matters are not essential to salvation, they should not exclude brothers and sisters in Christ of differing stances from unifying together under the gospel. A healthy way to think about these matters is to recognize that they have a large impact on the unity of a local congregation, but they should not impact the unity of the global Church. Some of these beliefs include how churches should be led, how baptism and communion should be practiced, and the use of spiritual gifts.

Tertiary Issues consist of beliefs that allow for a variety of stances within a local congregation without causing difficulty in the day-to-day practice of the congregation. These beliefs are still important because they shape and form how a believer interacts with Scripture as a whole, but they should not cause any kind of tension or disunity within a local congregation. Some of these beliefs are interpretations of the end-times or matters of personal conscience.



WEEK #1

SOVEREIGN CREATOR

BIG IDEA #1: GOD IS SOVEREIGN

What does the word “sovereign” mean? To be sovereign is to be in supreme control and authority. When we say that God is sovereign, we mean that He is in control over every aspect of the universe. There is nothing that is bigger than God. Nothing has more power or authority than Him. Likewise, there is nothing that exists outside of God’s authority. God is over every matter of creation – including you and me.

I am the LORD, and there is no one else;
There is no God except Me.
I will arm you, though you have not known Me,
So that people may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no one else,
The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating disaster;
I am the LORD who does all these things.

(Isaiah 45:5-7, NASB 2020)

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are just a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”


(James 4:14-15, NASB 2020)

Application:

God’s sovereignty means that He is in control, not us. While God has given us agency and a will to make decisions, He has not given up His sovereignty and control over all of creation. God’s sovereignty and our agency mysteriously work hand-in-hand according to God’s infinite wisdom. This belief has two profound principles for our lives.

First, we must acknowledge that God is the sovereign Lord of the universe, and we must daily lay down our pride before Him. Pride is a bitter root of sin which often drives us to turn away from God and elevate ourselves above other people. But when we remember that God is the Lord and that there is no one else, we ought to be brought to a place of humility, not only before Him, but before other humans as well. When we kill our pride and we let go of our need for control, we enter a state primed for the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus.

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Secondly, remembering that God is sovereign should bring us great peace and security, even in the most chaotic and anxious times. God is in control and works all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). God has a plan for your life (Ephesians 1:9-11), and He is capable of providing your needs (Matthew 6:26-27). When you remember that God is sovereign, you can rest knowing that God is in control and that He has a plan.

BIG IDEA #2: GOD IS OUR CREATOR

God is the creator of the universe and everything in it. Everything which exists ultimately owes its existence to God for everything is from Him and was set into motion by Him. God's sovereignty and role as creator are intimately linked together. It is because of God's sovereign power which He was able to create, and because He is creator, He has the sovereign right to rule over creation. Nothing exists on its own. Just as you came into being through your parents and a seed is borne from fruit, everything in existence owes its existence to God the Creator.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

(Genesis 1:1, NASB 2020)

for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

(Colossians 1:16-17, NASB 2020)

Application:

Because God is our Creator, we can know that we were designed with purpose and intentionality. God is not an abstract artist throwing paint randomly onto the canvas. Everything in the universe is designed in an intricate manner to cohesively work together to bring about and foster life. Psalm 139 states that God wove the psalmist together in his mother's womb and the prophet Jeremiah describes Israel as a lump of clay to be shaped and formed by God (Jeremiah 18). The Bible repeatedly describes how God is intentionally bringing everything into existence and shaping and forming creation to His will.

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When we remember that God is our Creator, we should remember that we are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). You are God's masterpiece! He loves you and cares for you. You are not a random speck floating through space. You are not a product of chaos. You are not a mistake. You have been intentionally designed by God, and even though this world has fallen into sin and disarray, God is at work recreating you into the likeness of Jesus. He made you and He loves you. Whenever you feel unloved or unworthy, remember that you were made by a wonderful Creator who does not make mistakes.

DEVOTIONAL #1 – GOD IS ETERNAL

The eternal God is a hiding place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms;

(Deuteronomy 33:27a)

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

(Revelation 22:13)

God's eternality means that He always was, always is, and always will be. There has never been a time without God and there never will be a time without God. God cannot perish, He cannot fade away, and He cannot be killed. God existed before anything in creation came to be, and He will continue to exist even if everything in this world were to cease.

God's eternality should bring us to a state of awe and wonder. We are limited temporal creatures who have a specific starting point and ending point. From dust we were made and to dust we shall return. Yet God has no beginning nor end. He simply was, is, and always be. This existence is not something we can fully comprehend or fathom, and we ought to praise God for his wondrous eternality.

Despite being limited creatures, human beings long for eternity. Throughout all of history humans have sought paths to immortality. From ancient kings being buried in tombs believed to grant them an eternal and divine existence, adventurers seeking the mythological fountain of youth, and modern-day tech companies researching ways to digitize human consciousness, we have strived to overcome our finality. The Scriptures speak to this longing for eternity in Ecclesiastes when the teacher says, "He has placed eternity in the human heart."

By God's grace, we were designed to experience eternity with Him! Though we have a definitive starting point, and due to sin, this life will come to an end, God has given us the promise that in Christ Jesus we will experience life eternal. God has given us the promise in Jesus that just as He rose from the dead, we too will rise from the grave. Our resurrection will not be a temporary resurrection to only meet death yet again, but that resurrection is a permanent victory over death itself.

By God's grace, we were designed to experience eternity with Him!

Though this life has trouble, we should not panic or feel unaccomplished. God will never fade, and because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we have all of eternity with our Creator and Savior to look forward to.

Prayer:

Lord, may we praise your name for all eternity! In the troubles of this life, remind us of the hope we have in your eternity. When we experience great loss, may we find comfort in knowing that this world is only temporary, but that our lives in the New Heavens and the New Earth will be Yours forevermore. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does your hope for eternity help you when facing the difficulties of this present life?

DEVOTIONAL #2 – GOD IS EXTRATEMPORAL

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

(2 Peter 3:8, NASB 2020)

Because God is the Sovereign Eternal Creator who always was, is, and will be, God is extratemporal. The word “extratemporal” is a fancy way of saying that God exists outside of time itself. Because we are limited temporal creatures, we perceive time to be an all-encompassing force which surrounds us. We live in one particular moment of time, and we have never known any other way of existing. However, time does not surround God. Rather God surrounds time itself. Time did not exist before God, God existed before time itself!

Time is an aspect of creation. The way in which we experience and understand time is through created things such as the rising of the sun, the glow of the moon, and the changing of seasons. If the sun never set, the leaves never changed color, and the body never aged, we would not have any way of perceiving time. Time is not a mystical or spiritual force which governs reality; time itself is a created thing. Since God is the Creator of all things, that means that He is the one who invented time and set it into motion! Just look at Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning...” The beginning does not begin until God creates, yet God existed before the beginning! God existed before time began.

If your head is spinning and this all sounds confusing, don’t worry! Take a breath. God’s extratemporality is something which we are not fully able to comprehend. And it is even more difficult to wrap our brain around the fact that because of God’s transcendence and omnipresence (two attributes we will look at later), God engages with all moments of time at the same time. That means that God is in the past, and the present, and the future all at once! God sees every moment of history, all that has happened, all that is happening, and all that will happen, all at once. The mere thought of such an experience is enough to make our brain hurt, yet God is far beyond our imagination.

So what does God’s extratemporality mean for us? What is the practical takeaway? If God exists outside of time and experiences all time at once,

then that means that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was a sacrifice that covered all of our sin: past, present, and future. Your sin today 2,000 years after Jesus was known and covered by Jesus' work on the cross. You can rest at peace knowing that all of your sin, including the sin you have yet to commit, has already been forgiven.

Likewise, you can be at peace knowing that God has a plan for your life. He knows your past, present, and future. He's already in your future!

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Paul speaks about this in Ephesians 2:10 saying, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (NASB 2020). God has already prepared good work for you to walk into in your future. If you know Christ's love, you know that God has redeemed you, restored you, and has prepared a way for you.

When life feels confusing and chaotic, be at peace knowing that God has a plan for you! Your future does not intimidate or scare God; He is already there. When life is hard, when all seems lost, put your trust in the God who holds all of time in His hands. He has good plans for you.

Prayer:

God, help me to trust You and Your plans for my life and this world. You know all of time, and this whole world including its history and future belong to You. When life is hard, help me to patiently trust You and know that You have a plan. Amen.

Reflection Question:

When stressed, how can you "zoom out" to try to see your life story from God's perspective?

DEVOTIONAL #3 – GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

‘Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.

(Jeremiah 32:17, ESV)

Omnipotence means “all-powerful.” Being omnipotent means that you have unlimited power. If you were omnipotent, you could do anything that you could possibly think of.

For example, let’s say you wanted a cup of coffee right now. If you were omnipotent, all you would have to do is snap your fingers and a cup of coffee would appear right in front of you. You could make it any kind of coffee that you wanted. It could be your favorite Starbucks latte, a diner cup of joe, or a handcrafted light roast pour-over made with the finest beans from Ethiopia. It could have whatever amount of half-n-half, milk, or heavy whipping cream that you wanted. If you were omnipotent, you could have any kind of coffee you wanted whenever you wanted. Nothing could stop you from getting whatever you desired. You would not need to wait or rely on anyone else to do it for you.

Omnipotence is a lot more than just getting your favorite coffee 24/7 for free. Being omnipotent means that you could make anything possible. You are in complete control; there would be no limit to your power. Sounds nice, right? If we are honest with ourselves, there have been plenty of times where we wished we had that kind of power. Who has not watched Disney’s Aladdin and thought, “Man, I wish I had a genie that could give me whatever I wished for!” It is a simple desire that every human has thought about at one point or another. We desire control.

God displayed His omnipotence when He spoke the universe into being. Not only was God capable of creating the universe, but the way in which He creates clues us into God’s unlimited power. God does not use any tools or resources in order to create. He does not need any materials or blueprints. How does God

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create? He simply speaks. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

We often find ourselves lacking the power and control we wish we had. We believe the lie of the enemy when we think “If only I had more power, if only I was in more control. All of my problems would go away.” But God did not intend for us to have unlimited power. He intended for us to rely on His unlimited power. Paul speaks of this in his letter to the church in Ephesus saying, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21, ESV). God is far more capable than we could ever imagine, and the power of our God is at work within us through His Holy Spirit! What an incredible thought! Nothing is too difficult for God. The next time you feel overwhelmed or hopeless, remember that God is all-powerful. The next time you feel tempted to try to gain more power or control, remember to instead trust in the infinite power of our God.

Nothing is beyond His power.

Prayer:

Lord, You are all-powerful! Nothing is too hard for you! Nothing is beyond your capability! When my life seems too stressful or too difficult, remind me that anything is possible with You. Amen.

Reflection Question:

What is the biggest challenge that you have faced or are currently facing? How does God’s omnipotence help you face that challenge?

DEVOTIONAL #4 – GOD IS OMNISCIENT

God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

(1 John 3:20b, ESV)

Being omniscient means that you know everything. If it exists, you know about it, kind of like the internet. In our current culture, we have become accustomed to having immediate answers to any question we could possibly ask. We all carry a device in our pocket which enables us to look up whatever information we are wanting to know at any given moment. This way of life has actually had a physiological impact on us – our brains have been “re-wired” to process information differently now that answers are so immediately available.

The digital age we now live in has prompted the development of several online communities whose goals are to rediscover information or media that has been lost. With a seemingly “all-knowing” internet, the idea that something could possibly be unknown is fascinating. Whether its scanning old newspaper articles or finding a recording of a lost episode of a children’s show from the 90s, these communities are obsessed with trying to find and preserve every piece of information and art which has ever occurred.

We live as if the internet knows everything, but the honest truth is the opposite. As much as we would like to think human beings have reached a point where we can know everything, we must admit that we do not actually know everything (for fun, try convincing a rebellious teenager of that fact!). We must lay down our pride and admit that there are things which we do not know. We are not omniscient.

Yet God is omniscient. God knows everything, and that includes you. God knows every detail of your life, and at first that may seem scary or invasive, but God’s knowing of you should actually bring great comfort, peace, and love. At a time where isolation and feelings of loneliness are skyrocketing, the idea that the God of the universe knows you and cares about you is deeply profound. You are not a random speck of dust floating through space. You are not a random unknown person in a sea of billions of other people. God knows you, and He loves you.

Other people may struggle to remember you. They may forget details about your life that are important. People may struggle to understand

you and may find it difficult to help you feel like you can truly connect with them. But God knows you. God understands you. He knows your thoughts and your feelings. He knows what you have done, and what you want to do. He knows your dreams and your fears. He knows your past and your future. In a big world filled with countless people, you can rest knowing that you are known by the God of the universe. “Lord, You have searched me and known me. How precious also are Your thoughts for me, God! How vast is the sum of them!” (Psalm 139:1 & 17, NASB 2020)

Prayer:

God, You know everything. You know what I am going to say before I even say it. Don't let me believe the lies of the enemy and think that I can hide my thoughts or my heart from You. Lord, help me to be vulnerable with You and trust You. Amen.

Reflection Question:

Do you feel okay when faced with a question you don't know the answer to, or does that situation cause you stress? How does God's omniscience comfort you when you face the unknown?

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DEVOTIONAL #5 – GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
If I take up the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will take hold of me.

(Psalm 139:7-10, NASB 2020)

Relationships require presence.

What's the difference between a fan and true friend? Like a friend, a fan may know a lot about a person. The fan may know when and where a person was born, where that person grew up, what that person's favorite ice cream flavor is, etc. The fan may spend a significant amount of time watching or listening to that person whether it be at that individual's concert or on their podcast or livestream. The fan may even be able to see that individual online every single week, more often than we may see some of our real-life friends! So, what makes the difference between a fan and a friend? A friend is able to have a real presence in the other person's life. They are able to be present with that person - not just watching, not just liking, not just commenting – but real, true engaging presence.

The internet has made it easier than ever to become a fan of someone. As social media, podcasts, and livestreams continue to be a normal part of our everyday life, it has never been easier to develop a parasocial relationship with someone on the internet. As we watch, like, comment, subscribe, etc., it can be easy for our brains to perceive that we may be developing a relationship with someone. But that relationship is deeply one-sided, and that relationship lacks a necessary component of true, mutual relationships: presence.

Sometimes it can even feel that way with God. Because God is well, the God of the universe, and not a random guy like Steve your co-worker, it can be easy to feel distant from God. The enemy often tries to convince us that God is not actually present with us, but the entire story of the Bible continually points to the theme that God is actually present with His people. From the tabernacle to the temple to communion, God is reg-

ularly reminding His people that He is indeed present with them. One of Jesus' titles itself is a reminder of His presence with us: "Emmanuel, God with us."

Psalm 139 is a wonderful reminder of God's omnipresence, a fancy way of saying that God is everywhere all at once. The psalmist is keenly aware of God's presence, and he knows that he could never outrun the love of God! From the mountains to the seas, from the heavens to the grave, God is present with the one whom He loves.

When you feel deeply alone, or if you hear the enemy's lies that God is far from you, know that you could never outrun the love of God. He is present with His people. There is no space too far from him. No space unknown and unlived in by Him.

Our God is with us, truly present with us. He is there in the hard times, and He is there in the joyful times. He is there to laugh with you, cry with you, work with you, rest with you. God is present, relationally present, wherever you go.

Prayer:

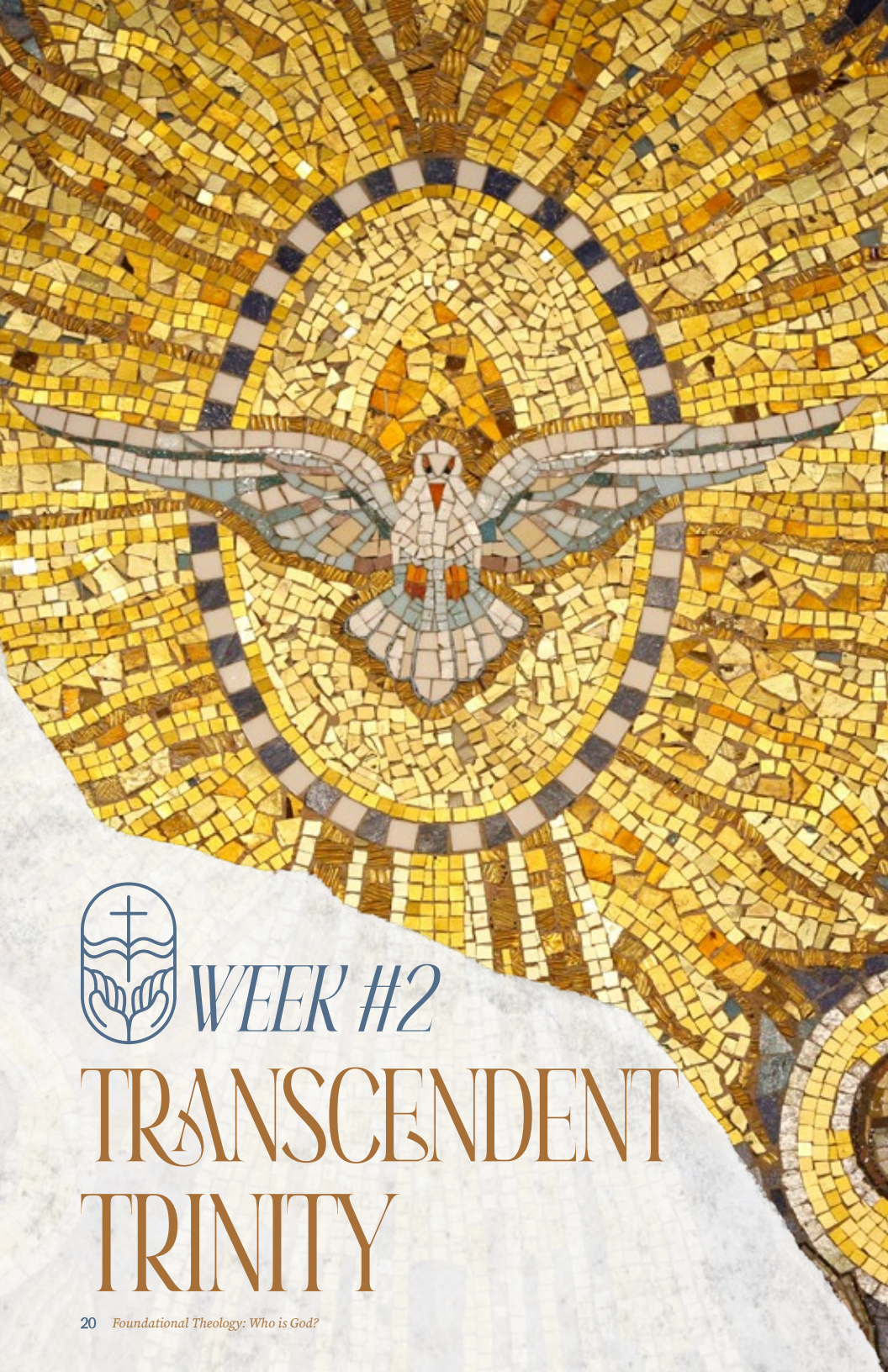
God, You are with me. Help me to never forget Your presence. When life is filled with distractions, help me to remember that You are here.

May I never go a single day without being aware of Your presence. May I give you the attention You deserve, and may I be comforted by Your ever-present love. Amen.

Reflection Question:

Do you truly believe that God is omnipresent? Do you acknowledge that He is with you wherever you go? How can you recognize God's presence in your day-to-day life?

*From the mountains
to the seas, from
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WEEK #2

TRANSCENDENT TRINITY

BIG IDEA #1: GOD IS TRANSCENDENT

What does the word “transcendent” mean? To be transcendent is to be above or beyond the range of physical human experience. God’s transcendence is a fancy word which wraps up all of the attributes from week 1. God’s power is far beyond what a human (or anything in the created universe) could possibly ever do. God’s knowledge is far beyond the smartest computer we could ever hope to invent. God’s presence transcends space and time itself!

God’s transcendence should not be understood as a linear increase in ability, but rather, that He is completely and wholly other. For example, let’s say that the strongest person who ever lived was rated with a strength score of 100. God’s transcendent omnipotence does not mean that He has a strength score of 1,000,000; God’s transcendence means that His strength score would be infinity! It is not only beyond what we could ever achieve, but also beyond what we could ever measure or conceive. God cannot be compared to a human, or anything in the created universe.

There is no one like You...

(Psalm 86:8a, NASB 2020)

The LORD is high above all nations;
His glory is above the heavens.
Who is like the LORD our God,
Who is enthroned on high?


(Psalm 113:4-5, NASB 2020)

For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

(Isaiah 55:8-9)

Application:

Throughout human history, various cultures have depicted their gods as bigger, faster, and stronger versions of themselves or other creatures. The Greek pantheon for example is filled with gods and goddesses who, for the most part, live and act as human beings who also happen to have powers over the sea, lightning, etc. But our God is not just a bigger, more powerful human. There is nothing in creation which could ever compare to our God!



This is one of the reasons why when God gives the people of Israel the Ten Commandments, He instructs them to never make any idols. No image or idol could ever accurately depict the person of God because nothing in creation could ever compare to Him!

God is above and beyond anything which we could imagine, and this fact should bring us to a place of awe and wonder before our God. We serve a God who is greater than our wildest dreams!

*There is nothing in creation which
could ever compare to our God!*

BIG IDEA #2: GOD IS TRINITY

The word trinity means “three-in-one.” The Scriptures are clear there is only one God. There is only one supreme Creator over the universe. Yet the Scriptures also reveal to us that God is far beyond what we can imagine or comprehend, and in His singular unity there is also a unified plurality. The Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, is not a collection of three different gods, but the unity of one transcendent God who is not like us human beings who are simple singular beings. Nothing in creation is like our triune God!

Hear, Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

(Deuteronomy 6:4, NASB 2020)

Then God said, “Let Us make mankind in Our image...”

(Genesis 1:26a, NASB 2020)

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”

(Luke 3:21-22, NASB 2020)


Application:

For 2,000 years, Christians have struggled to comprehend the concept of the Trinity, let alone try to put it into words. If you have been a Christian for a long time, you have probably heard people attempt to explain the trinity by using analogies such as an egg, the sun, or a three-leaf clover. Unfortunately all of these analogies (and every other attempt to compare God’s triune nature to something in creation), end up actually stating some kind of ancient heresy like modalism, Arianism, partialism, etc. If the concept of the Trinity is hard to wrap your brain around, that is okay! There is no one like our God!

The Athanasian Creed (which has been used by Christians since the early sixth century) is perhaps one of the best articulations of this transcendent mystery revealed to us in the Scriptures stating:

“...we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence.

For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another.



But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal...

...The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal.

And yet there are not three eternal beings; there is but one eternal being. So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings; there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being....”

Ironically, this transcendent mystery which is beyond our comprehension actually enables us to more personally relate to God. Knowing God the Father enables us to understand our God as our Father and for us to relate to Him as His children. Likewise, God the Son enables us to relate to God in the person of Jesus who walked, ate, talked, and worked among us! In the person of the Son, we relate to Jesus as a brother, a friend, a coworker, and a bride! And similarly, knowing God the Holy Spirit enables to relate to God as being present with us since we know that we have been filled by the Holy Spirit. Our physical bodies now serve as temples which contain the presence of God!

*The Father is
eternal, the
Son is eternal,
the Holy Spirit
is eternal.*

Despite the Trinity’s difficulty to comprehend, it is precisely because of the Trinity which we much more easily know, understand, and relate to our transcendent God.



DEVOTIONAL #1 - PERICHORESIS

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

(John 14:8-11, ESV)

Perichoresis is a fancy word referring to the mutual indwelling of the three persons of the Trinity. The three persons of the Trinity are distinct persons. That is, the Son is not the Father, and the Father is not the Holy Spirit. The persons are distinct from one another, and yet they maintain a perfect cohesive unity in which they dwell within one another.

Jesus’ words in John 14 depict this distinct, yet unified cohesion of the Trinity. The Son is a distinct person, and the Father is a distinct person. Yet when Philip asks to see the Father, Jesus’ response is that the Father has already been made evident through the Son! Jesus’ words to Philip are striking, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?” From Jesus’ perspective, if He were to be truly known by His disciples, they would know that God the Father dwells in Jesus and is seen through Jesus. Philip’s inability to see the Father in the Son reveals that he still has much to learn in his knowledge of Jesus.

This mutual indwelling helps us to understand how the three persons of the Trinity are unified together as one God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all dwell within one another, and they all work in accordance with one another. In John 6:38 Jesus says, “For I have come down from heav-

*The persons are distinct from one
another, and yet they maintain
a perfect cohesive unity*

en, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” (ESV) Jesus does not perform a single action which is in contradiction to the will of the Father. Jesus does nothing apart from the will of the Father! The Father, Son, and Spirit all work together with the same unified will in perfect accordance with one another.

This unified will and perfect teamwork within the Trinity gives us comfort; we can know that the distinct persons of the Trinity will never act on their own or in contradiction to one another. There is perfect mysterious unity within the one true God, and that unity will never be broken.

Human beings struggle to work together. When we cooperate with one another, we can accomplish great things! God Himself recognized the power He has given us in our cooperation during the construction of the Tower of Babel. Seeing the human beings’ unity, God said, “And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.” (Genesis 11:6, ESV). However, due to our sin, we often fail to work together with one will. Our sin pits us against each other or leads us to use one another for our own gain.

When we see the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity, we should be reminded of God’s perfect unity. And as we remain in Christ and follow Him, we will be molded by the power of the Spirit in accordance to the Father’s will to overcome our sinful desires and truly unite with one another. It was Jesus Himself who prayed to the Father, “that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:21, NASB 2020)

Perichoresis not only points to the marvelous and mysterious nature of our God, it is also a reminder of the kind of unity we will experience in the resurrection of Jesus and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer:

Lord, You are a wonderful mystery! Thank You that You so beyond what I can conceive of or imagine. May I be inspired by the unity You have within Yourself to love and unify with the brothers and sisters You have given me in Your Church. And may I root myself in You to remain in You for all of my days. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How should the mutual dwelling of the persons of the Trinity inspire us to be unified with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ?

DEVOTIONAL #2 – GOD IS HOLY

but alike the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written: “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

(1 Peter 1:15-16, NASB 2020)

And one called out to another and said,
“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of armies.
The whole earth is full of His glory.”

(Isaiah 6:3, NASB 2020)

To be holy means to be set apart.

Something that is holy is distinct and separated from everything else around it. Holiness is contrasted by the word “common.” For example, if you had a plain fork that you used every day to eat breakfast, it would be a common ordinary fork. But if you had a special fork, one specially crafted from rare materials, elegantly designed, engraved with a unique marking, which was only used for the most special occasions, that fork would be “holy” in a way. That fork is set apart for special use and is treated with great care because there are not any other forks like it in your home!

Because there is no one like our God, He is holy. God is distinctly set apart from the rest of creation because there is nothing like Him! In His holiness, God is perfect, pure, and blameless. There is no blemish, no wrongdoing, no mistake with God.

It is precisely the perfect holiness of God which can make us feel uncomfortable when we encounter God. For we know that we are not holy! We have been corrupted by sin. The prophet Isaiah declares this upon encountering God’s holiness when he says, “Woe to me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of armies.” (Isaiah 6:5, NASB 2020) Isaiah recognizes that his sin cannot stand in the presence of a holy God.

But what happens next? God has Isaiah purified. God loves us, and God desires to invite us into His holiness. God wants us to be holy just as He is holy! But we cannot join in God’s holiness while we are corrupt with

sin. By the grace of God, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has made a way for our sin to be washed away. Jesus purifies us and ushers us into the holiness of God so that we can be with Him in perfect holiness for all eternity.

By being made holy by our God, we become set apart from the sinful world in which we live. It is through our holiness that we can show the rest of the world that there is another way to live, the way of Jesus which leads to eternal life! Our holiness will be our best method of reaching the lost and caring for the needy, for if we are to be holy we cannot simply say with our lips that Jesus is Lord, we must actually be one with Christ and bear the holiness of our God.

Prayer:

Lord, You are holy. May I be holy as You are holy. Teach me what it means to be set apart within this world, that I would not fully disconnect from the world which you have put me in, but rather, live a holy life within this world so that it may see Your holiness in me. Amen.

*God is distinctly
set apart from the
rest of creation
because there is
nothing like Him!*

Reflection Question:

What does it look like for you to be “holy as God is holy” from Monday to Saturday?

DEVOTIONAL #3 – GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE

Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

(Romans 11:33, NASB 2020)

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:7, NASB 2020)

Because God is transcendent and holy, He is beyond our comprehension. God is too great for us to fully understand! God's incomprehensibility should bring us to a place of awe and wonder. You are never going to fit God into a box. If you could, He wouldn't be God. If God was small enough for you to have fully figured out, would He be worth worshipping? Would He be worth submitting to?

For some of us, God's incomprehensibility is comforting and invites us into a dreamy state of imagination where we become lost in wonder of this amazing God. We look up to the stars and think, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1, ESV) In this instance, God's incomprehensibility excites us and prompts us to seek Him more, for there will always be more discover about our God!

But for others of us, God's incomprehensibility can feel frustrating or discouraging. Some of us are designed in such a way that we need answers, we need to understand everything. For those of us who may feel this way, don't let the enemy lead you into that discouragement! Don't become distant from God because He is beyond our comprehension! God's incom-

*God's incomprehensibility excites
us and prompts us to seek Him
more, for there will always be
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prehensibility does not mean that He is not knowable. Rather, it means that we must rely on God to reveal Himself in order for us to know Him. And by His grace and love, God has revealed Himself to us!

First, God has revealed Himself to us by designing all of creation to point back to Him. Paul speaks of this in Romans when he says, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:19-20, ESV) According to Paul, living in the world and discovering all of the wonders that creation has to offer is a natural and instinctive way to learn about God. Science, art, geography, mathematics, etc. all point back to a God who created the universe with great power and intentionality.

Secondly, God has revealed Himself to us by directly interacting and communicating with us. The Bible is filled with story after story of God entering into our world in order that we may know Him. Jesus lived among us so that we would know Him. The Holy Spirit moves through the people of God all across the world so that we would know Him. God has given us the Scriptures, speaking through prophets, kings, poets, and apostles so that we would know Him!

God’s incomprehensibility is not a barrier that keeps God away from us. God’s incomprehensibility is an invitation to never stop discovering the infinite wonders of who God is.

Prayer:

Lord, Your ways are not my ways! Your thoughts are not my thoughts! When you feel to beyond my understanding, remind me that You have made Yourself known to me. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How can you continue to grow in your knowledge of who God is?

DEVOTIONAL #4 – GOD IS IMMUTABLE

“For I the LORD do not change...”

(Malachi 3:6a, ESV)

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

(Hebrews 13:8, ESV)

The word “immutable” simply means “unchangeable.” God will never change. He is the same yesterday, today, tomorrow, and forevermore.

We human beings seem to experience nothing but change! With every day we get older. Our bodies change, our opinions change, our jobs change, our friends change, our homes change, etc. With the rise of the internet, change seems to occur rapidly at an unprecedented pace.

While nostalgia has always been a powerful force, it seems to have an especially strong impact on the current culture which can never seem to stabilize. Our constantly changing nature leads us to long for something stable, secure, unchanging. The fast-paced modern lifestyle is taking many of us straight into confusion, burnout, and apathy. Where can we find comfort in a world which always seems to be shifting, and at a quicker pace with each day? We can rest on the firm foundation of our unchanging God.

“But God’s firm foundation stands...”

(2 Timothy 2:19a, ESV)

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower...”

(Proverbs 18:10, ESV)

Because our God is immutable, He is a firm foundation, a strong tower, which will never fail. We can firmly root ourselves into the person of God and know that we will never be shaken or brought into disaster.

*God will never
change. He is the
same yesterday,
today, tomorrow,
and forevermore.*

Our unchanging God has won victory against sin and death, and He holds us for all eternity! Though we face many trials and pains in this life, we know that God holds us, and like Christ Jesus, will raise us from the dead to experience life eternal.

The enemy will do everything he can to raise doubt in our minds. The enemy will try to convince us that God cannot be depended upon. The enemy will try to convince us that the way of Jesus has continually changed over the last 2,000 years. He will try to convince us that our faith is not stable or secure.

But the Lord our God does not change. He has won the battle, and His victory will always remain secure. His goodness will never disappear. His grace will not fade away. His love will not run out. You are safe in the arms of an unchanging, stable, secure God.

Prayer:

Lord, You are the unchanging One. May I take comfort in trusting in Your constant and stable faithfulness. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does God's immutability help us feel safe and secure now and forever?

DEVOTIONAL #5 – GOD IS IMMANENT

Now they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...

(Genesis 3:8a, NASB 2020)

“that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’;”

(Acts 17:27-28a, ESV)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory...

(John 1:14a, NASB 2020)

Though God is transcendent, holy, and incomprehensible, He is also immanent. God’s immanence means that He is present within His creation. God is not distant or unreachable. God delights in being present with His creation.

This is the reason why God instructed His people to construct the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a holy tent which was to be located in the center of the people of Israel. Eventually, the tabernacle was constructed as a massive, unmoving building referred to as the temple. The tabernacle and the temple were to be physical locations in which the real presence of God would be manifest among the people.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

(Exodus 40:34, NASB 2020)

Jesus would then arrive as a living tabernacle. In the beginning of his gospel, John uses the Greek word for “tabernacle” to refer to Jesus’ dwelling among us. Jesus takes on the role of the tabernacle/temple and embodies the presence of God so that God can be present within creation and among His people. Then because of the transforming work of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we become like Christ, becoming physical spaces for the presence of God to dwell!

because of the transforming work of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we become like Christ

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NASB 2020)

If you know Christ and have been saved, if you have been born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, you must know that your physical body is now a space for the real presence of God to dwell in! God is not far from you. He is not distant. God is with you! God is in you!

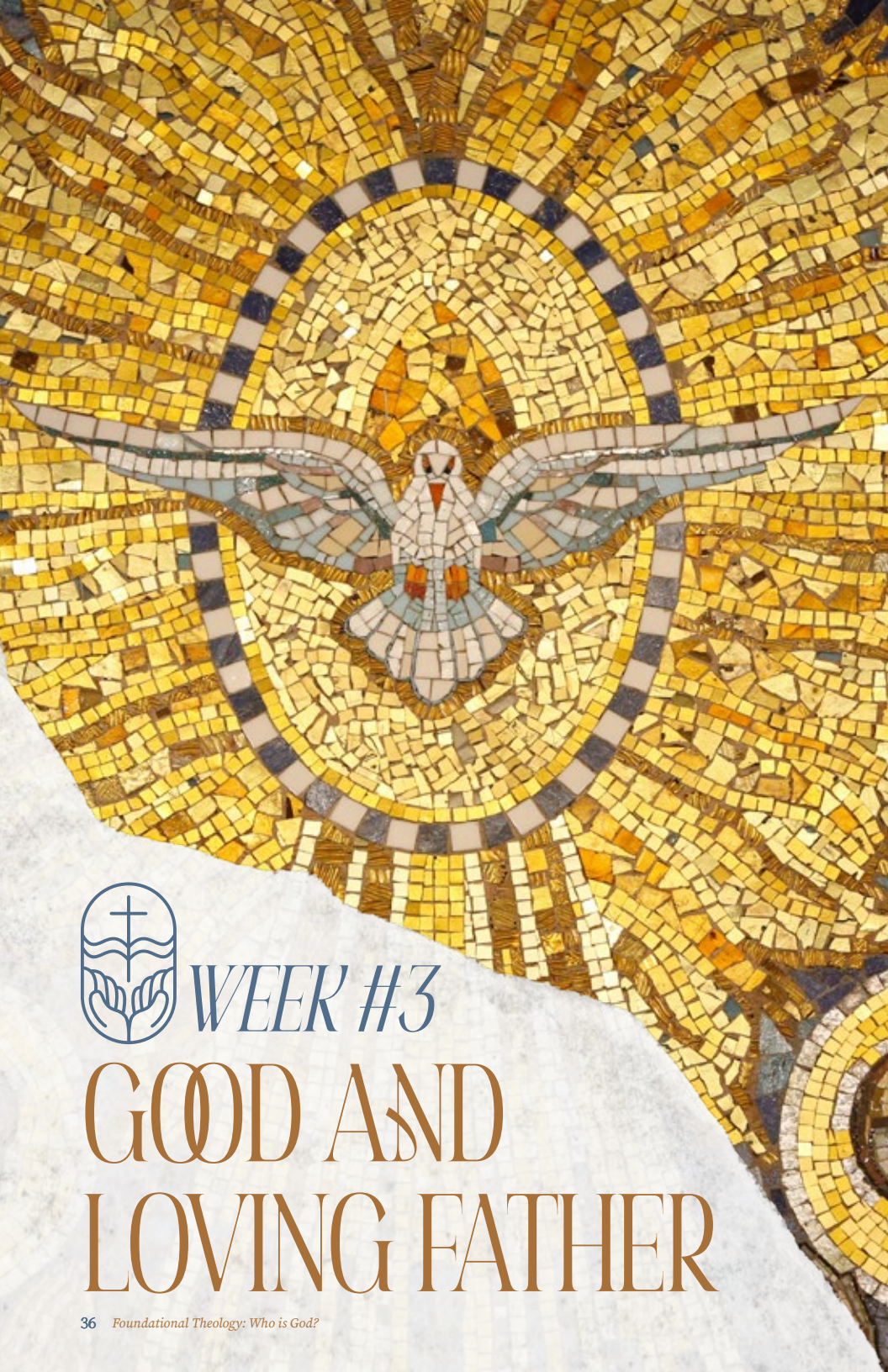
While God's omnipresence speaks to His sovereign power to be everywhere all at once, God's immanence describes His personal presence among His people in creation. As a friend delights in just being with a beloved brother or sister, God delights in being present with you. He is not far, for in God we live and move and have our being.

Prayer:

God, You are near. May I never forget Your presence. Lord, when I feel distant from You, remind me of Your closeness to me. May I not forget You, but delight in You every morning and every evening. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How is God's immanence comforting? How is God's immanence convicting?



WEEK #3

GOOD AND LOVING FATHER

BIG IDEA #1: GOD IS GOOD

What does it mean that God is good? For something to be good it must be right and beneficial. When we say that God is good, it means that all that He is and all that He does is by nature a benefit to not only Himself, but to all of creation. Every attribute and action of God is worthy of approval for God is not purely concerned with Himself but for all of His creation. Even God's justice and judgment is in service to His goodness, for His mighty acts of judgment are done to correct destructive evil and protect creation.

You are good and You do good;
Teach me Your statutes.

(Psalm 119:68, NASB 2020)

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

(Romans 8:28, NASB 2020)

Application:

Because God is good, always good, we can trust that His ways are right and beneficial to life. Even if we may not understand how or why the ways of God are good, if we trust in God's character we can humbly submit to His authority.

The enemy will try to convince us that God's ways are not good. The enemy will try to convince us that our ways are better, that our sinful desires can bring about more delight and more joy. When we fail to trust God's declaration of what is good and what is evil, we fall into the same sin as Adam and Eve when they took the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve did not trust what God had to say about good and evil; they wanted to define good and evil for themselves.

We live in an upside-down world in many ways. The enemies of God will declare that what is good is actually evil and what is evil is actually good! Our own sin will constantly try to pull us away from God's goodness and truth by convincing ourselves that we know better. However, it does not take long to learn that our feelings are fickle. Something can feel good and right now, but end up leading us to disastrous consequences!

Trusting in God's goodness means affirming that God actually has our best interests in mind. Like a wise parent instructing a child in the way they should go, God is good and cares about us!

BIG IDEA #2: GOD IS LOVING

God is the source of love. God is not only good in the sense that every decision He makes is correct and rationally beneficial for creation, but His goodness is also filled with a deep and unfathomable love for us. It is because of God's love that we were ever created in the first place, and it is certainly because of His love that we have been saved through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

God's love flows through every single one of His words and deeds. God's love for creation flows through His justice against the evil which wants to corrupt and destroy it. God's love for us flows through His immanence with us. God's love flows through His mighty acts of salvation, the sacrifice made for our sin, and the victorious defeat of death. God's love flows through His patience and His wisdom. The love of God cannot be separated from anything in which He does.

The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may live through Him. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

(1 John 4:8-11, NASB 2020)

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

(Lamentations 3:22-23, ESV)

Application:

Because God has lavished so much love upon us, we are called to love as He loves! John says succinctly that the one who does not love proves through their lack of love that they do not know God. Likewise, the one who loves abundantly shows that they are rooted in Christ Jesus who showed us what it means to love!

*The love of
God cannot be
separated from
anything in
which He does.*

What are the greatest commandments? To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. These two commandments of love summarize all of the other commands from God. God is not a cold, heartless law giver. God gives us commands because He loves us! He wants what is good for us, and so He guides us in His love to learn what it means to love.

How will you imitate the love of Christ this day? How will you love your family? Your friends? The people at your church? Your coworkers? Your enemies?

How will you love all the people which God places before you this day?



DEVOTIONAL #1 – GOODNESS COMES FROM GOD

“You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.”

(Psalm 119:68, ESV)

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. ‘No one is good except God alone.’”

(Mark 10:18, CSB)

“To declare, ‘The Lord is just; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.’”

(Psalm 92:15, CSB)

God is good, but what does good truly mean? In the biblical sense, the word good holds a meaning of right behavior or uprightness. We all desire to do what is right and please the Lord, but it does not take long for us to realize that even on our best days we fall short. Our human frailty and sinful nature often does not do what is right or good. As Mark 10:18 says, “No one is good but One, that is, God.” Although we do not always do what is right, our good Father always does what is right. This is because of His goodness. Because He himself is good, He always does what is right. Out of His goodness, He cannot wrong us or sin against us. Not only does He not wrong us, but He desires to give His children good gifts.

James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” The Lord gives us good and perfect gifts. He gives us the right gifts and He never changes. He is a kind Father who lavishes good gifts on His children. Out of His sovereignty, omniscience, and goodness He gives us the right gifts at the right times in accordance with His plans.

As we grow in our walk with the Lord, our knowledge and experience of His goodness increases, and we grow in trusting His goodness. In this process, we should desire to grow like Him in goodness. Psalm 107:9 says, “For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.” He fills us with good things and our overflow of knowing Him should be good and right things. One of the fruits of those who are in Christ is goodness, and the Lord is faithful to grow goodness in us just as He is good.

Prayer:

Lord, You are good! You are good all the time, and all the time You are good. The enemy will try to convince me that You do not have my best interest at heart. Lord, defend me from the lies of the enemy! I know that You are for me, not against me! You are good.

Reflection Question:

Do you trust that God is always good?

As we grow in our walk with the Lord, our knowledge and experience of His goodness increases, and we grow in trusting His goodness.

DEVOTIONAL #2 – LOVE IS DEFINED BY GOD

“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him.”

(1 John 4:7-9, CSB)

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

(1 John 3:16, NIV)

The world tries to define love and how we ought to love, but as our Creator and the Creator of love itself, God gets to define love by His own terms. Scripture tells us in 1 John 4, that God Himself is love. In essence, His identity and nature is love. We see what love is through God’s character and the person of Jesus. We see God show His love for His people through his patience, mercy, grace, provision, and protection.

1 John points to the ultimate display of God’s love being shown in the sending of His only Son to lay down his life and pay our debt. We know what love is by the sacrificial work of Jesus. The very Son of God humbled himself to serve the very people who would wound Him. Jesus showed compassion for sinful man, who were undeserving of His gift.

God Himself is love. In essence, His identity and nature is love.

Scripture tells us how we know what love is, but then we are told that we are to love in order to show the world that we know God. In knowing God and loving like Him, we are called to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. God tells us what love is and then tells us to love others likewise.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 says, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not

self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (NIV). This is the kind of love we have been shown by God. Is this the kind of love we are showing our brothers and sisters?

Prayer:

God, You are the source of all love. May I not try to find love in other places which will only leave me feeling empty. Instead, may I find the ultimate love in You and thank You for the love I experience through the people who have put in my life. Teach me to love as You love. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How can we love others with the same love that God shares with us?

DEVOTIONAL #3 – GOD IS WISE

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

(Romans 11:33-36, NIV)

“Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.”

(Daniel 2:20-21, NIV)

The virtue of wisdom is a trait that is praised many times in Scripture. Believers are encouraged to be wise in order to live a godly life. But how do we obtain such wisdom in our daily lives?

The Bible teaches that God Himself is wise and wisdom comes from Him alone. “The world attempts to find some semblance of truth by interacting with creation. The Bible declares wisdom is beyond that: it is the person behind all thought and existence. This connects to Jesus’ teaching on how he sends believers the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth: ‘But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come’ (John 16:13).” (Bible Study Tools). Wisdom is found in the one who knows all and has created all things. We see human beings throughout Scripture realizing how small they really are in the vast scope of the knowledge and wisdom of God who has made all things and sustains all things according to His will and infinite wisdom. If God Himself is wise and we are called to be wise like Him, then we must remain in Him and His Word.

*Believers are encouraged to be wise
in order to live a godly life.*

Scripture tells us that God gives wisdom to those who ask for wisdom (Proverbs 2:6, James 1:5). For believers, we have been given the Holy Spirit to guide us in the wisdom of God. The prophet Isaiah declared that the Spirit of the Lord is wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, and knowledge (Isaiah 11:1-2). If we are daily abiding in Christ through Scripture, prayer, and godly counsel then we can have wisdom. We can know what we ought to do as the Spirit of wisdom guides us.

Prayer:

Lord, Your wisdom is far greater than I could ever imagine! I so easily fall into the trap of relying on my own wisdom. Instead, may I daily lean on Your infinite wisdom! Amen.

Reflection Question:

What difficult decisions have you faced or are currently facing? How can you rely on God's wisdom when making these decisions?

DEVOTIONAL #4 – GOD IS JUST

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.

He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”

(Isaiah 42:1-4, NIV)

We all want things to be just or right and fair, but it does not take long to realize that many times people have differing ideas about what is just or right. Sinful human beings on their own cannot decide what is right and just. We need someone who is sinless and pure to define for us what is truly just. Within Scripture, justice is more than fairness. Justice in the Bible refers to God’s idea of what is right and holy.

“When we talk about God as just- because He is Holy, He sets the ultimate standard. He determines the beginning from the end and right from wrong. Justice is rooted in God because of his character- He is in Himself JUST” (Billy Graham Training Center at the Cove).

Mankind is marred by sin; therefore, our entire idea of rightness has been corrupted. Our hearts are deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). Because God is holy and sinless, He is perfectly right. He does and knows what is just in all things. We may think that we know what is just, but we can only know justice through knowing Jesus and walking in tune with the Holy Spirit guiding us daily.

The Psalmist shows us that we are to cry out to the Lord asking Him to teach us in his ways of justice and discernment.

“Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I trust your commands.”

- Psalm 119:66 (NIV)

God has a perfect sense of what is right and what is wrong. God deeply cares for those who have been victims of injustice and will work to enact justice on their behalf. The prophets throughout the Old Testament repeatedly convict Israel of their sin for enabling and promoting injustice.

God is deeply concerned with correcting what is wrong and establishing justice within His creation. However, God does not always immediately act to bring about swift justice due to His infinite wisdom, mercy, and patience. Likewise, God invites us to join Him in His desire for justice and calls us to help right what has been made wrong according to His perfect sense of justice. The Lord is faithful to us and helps us grow in holiness and justice as we seek Him. We must trust Him and abide in Him in order to truly know and discern what is the way of God's justice.

Justice in the Bible refers to God's idea of what is right and holy.

Prayer:

God, You are just. You will make all things right. Even though this present world is filled with chaos, I know that You will have justice and order everything to be right again. Help me to patiently trust You and rejoice in the work which You are doing. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How should God's deep concern for justice compel us to be people of justice in this present life?

DEVOTIONAL #5 – GOD IS FAITHFUL

“But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.”

(2 Thessalonians 3:3, ESV)

“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

(Lamentation 3:22-23, NIV)

“And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

(Exodus 34:6-7, NIV)

God keeps His promises.

One of God’s core attributes is His faithfulness. God is steady, unchanging, sure to do what He says He will do, and always reliable. Even when His people fail to uphold their end of the deal, God upholds His end of the promise and does what sinful man could never accomplish. We see repeatedly in the Old Testament that the Israelites continually fail to stay true and faithful to God, but God promises to be their God and remain faithful to them.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s faithfulness and promise to His people. In Genesis, God promises to make a way to make things right between man and God, and in sending Jesus to defeat sin, this promise is fulfilled. Our human nature is fragile and

*God upholds His end of the
promise and does what sinful
man could never accomplish*

fickle. Our hearts are prone to stray away from truth and the promises we make. Only God in His perfection can be the true steadiness that our souls long for. We all desire a place of safety and stability; a God that never changes, who remains faithful even when we fall short.

As Hebrews 13:8 says, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will never let us down, because he cannot fail us. The very nature of God is faithfulness and no matter the challenges or seeming delays, He will keep His word and hold us fast. We can be confident in the salvation which we have received in Christ Jesus because Jesus is perfectly faithful.

God's faithfulness is not just another way to describe His immutability. God's faithfulness depicts the love and care that God has for His people. Because God loves His people, He will remain faithful to them. Even when His people fall away and are faithless, God remains faithful.

God's faithfulness then serves as the model which inspires us to be faithful to Him and to the people around us. May we be a people who are faithful like our God.

Prayer:

God, You are so faithful. Your mercies are new every morning. You have promised to never leave us or forsake us. Teach me to trust in Your never-failing faithfulness, and mold me to be faithful as You are. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does God's unrelenting faithfulness remind us that He will never fail us?



WEEK #4

INCARNATE SON

BIG IDEA #1 – THE INCARNATION

The incarnation refers to the wondrous mystery that God took on flesh in the person of Jesus.

When speaking to the woman at the well, Jesus says that “God is spirit,” meaning that God does not have a corporeal body which He is limited to. Yet the God who has no physical body took on a body in the person of Jesus to inhabit the earth. The Son existed before the world began, for it was through the Son which the universe was created! (John 1:1-3)

The Son entered into creation in the person of Jesus to fulfill the Father’s plan of redemption for us! The incarnation is a wondrous mystery which displays God’s love for us. Because the Son was embodied in the flesh, He could offer the sacrifice needed for our sin. The God who had no body willingly crafted a body for Himself to embody for the purpose of taking on our sin, suffering, and dying. This amazing God, who contains the power of life itself, created a body to experience death for our sake.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:14, NASB 2020)

For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 9:6, NASB 2020)

Application:

The incarnation reveals to us that God deeply loves us and desires to be present with us. Jesus’ life did not immediately take Him to the cross. Jesus lived, worked, played, rested, and ate just as we do! The Son became like us in order that He could be with us, make Himself known to us, and save us from sin and death. Know that you are valued and loved by an amazing God!

*This amazing God, who contains
the power of life itself, created a body
to experience death for our sake.*

BIG IDEA #2 – THE SON

As the Son, Jesus fulfills the merciful will of His Father in order for us to be redeemed from sin and adopted as sons and daughters of the living God.

As the Son, Jesus acts not on His own accord but in humble submission to the will of the Father who crafted His plan of redemption from before time began. Likewise, the Son's power does not exist on its own, but rather, the might of the Father works through the Son to accomplish His wondrous miracles. This loving relationship gives us a glimpse into God's complex unity within Himself while inviting us to engage with Him.

It is through the Son that we become sons and daughters of the living God. Because the Son has defeated sin and made us His brothers and sisters, we experience adoption and are united with Christ Jesus. The Son is now our brother who is able to present us to the Father as holy and pure children free from sin.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, to the extent that He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

(Hebrews 1:1-4, NASB 2020)

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons and daughters.

(Galatians 4:4-5, NASB 2020)

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the originator of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for this reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, "I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BROTHERS, IN THE MIDST OF THE ASSEMBLY I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE."

(Hebrews 2:10-12, NASB 2020)

It is through the Son that we become sons and daughters of the living God.

Application:

We look to the Son not only as our redeemer, but also as a companion, a brother, and a teacher. The Son has revealed the Father's will to us and has shown us what it means to live a sin-free life. As we long to know God more, we look to the Son to pursue holy living which pleases the Father and brings about vibrant life.

The Son is the one who connects us back to the Father, so we must daily strive to follow the Son's example of life! We should daily strive to be more like Jesus as His way is the way which leads to life everlasting and harmony with God.

And when we live as Jesus lived, the world will notice. If you want to share the good news of Jesus with others, you must live out the way of Jesus in your day-to-day life. Other's must see how your life has been changed by the Son in order for them to believe your words about Him!

DEVOTIONAL #1 – HYPOSTATIC UNION

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. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:6-11, NASB 2020)

Beyond question, great is the mystery of godliness:

He who was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.

(1 Timothy 3:16, NASB 2020)

Hypostatic union refers to the complete and total unity of Jesus' human nature and divine nature. Jesus is not 50% God and 50% human. In a mysterious way, Jesus is 100% human and 100% God at the same time. Jesus does not "switch" between His humanity and divinity as if they are different roles to fulfill or hats He can take on and put off. Jesus is 100% human all of the time, and He is 100% God all of the time.

The word "hypostatic" is a fancy way of saying "personal." This human-divine unity is completely and totally joined together within the person of Jesus. There is no way in which you could separate Jesus' humanity from His divinity. As we try to understand and know Jesus more, we can easily fall into traps of focusing only on His humanity or only on His divinity. This kind of thinking will inevi-

*Jesus is 100%
human all of the
time, and He is
100% God all
of the time.*

tably give us a skewed picture of who Jesus really is, because these two natures cannot be separated!

The inseparable union of Jesus' human and divine natures simultaneously helps us to understand Jesus as a relatable human being while also bringing us to awe and amazement at His feet as the One through whom the universe was made. It is precisely through this union that Jesus is able to accomplish the Father's plan of redemption. Because Jesus is human, He is able to serve as an appropriate sacrifice for sin on our behalf. If He were not human, how would He take on our sin as our representative? And because Jesus is fully God, He is free from sin and cannot sin. He is perfectly holy and will never fall for the temptations from the enemy. Because He is human He can carry our sin to the grave, and because He is God He can rise from the grave victoriously leaving our sin behind.

Prayer:

Lord, Your Son is a wonderful Savior! May I delight in the wondrous mystery of the Son that God would become flesh and that a man could contain the fullness of God. You are wonderful! Amen.

Reflection Question:

When you think of Jesus, do you think of Him more as divine or more as human? How can you think of Jesus as both fully human and divine at the same time?

DEVOTIONAL #2 – JESUS' DIVINITY

“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

(John 8:56-59, ESV)

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

(Mark 4:35-41, ESV)

When Jesus said to the Jews, “before Abraham was, I AM,” they knew exactly what He meant.

In Exodus 3:14, God tells Moses that His name is “I AM WHO I AM.” This is how the Hebrew people would know their God. Their God is the God who simply is. He is the great I AM, and this is the name which the Hebrew people knew their God by for over a thousand years. When Jesus used the particular language “I AM,” the people knew exactly what He meant – He was claiming to be God Himself.

*and said to one another,
“Who then is this, that even the
wind and the sea obey him?”*

Throughout His ministry, Jesus displays His divine power in marvelous ways. From commanding the winds and the waves, to multiplying bread and fish, to casting out demons, to healing the sick, to raising the dead, and transfiguring before His disciples, it was undeniable that Jesus had divine power.

Jesus' divinity separates Him from every other figure in history. Plenty of people have performed incredible feats. There have been countless people who showed awe-inspiring wisdom, charisma, and talent. Yet no one other Jesus was the God of the universe in the flesh.

Jesus' divinity is critical in understanding how He accomplished redemption on the cross for us. Because of the first human's sin in the garden, all human beings have a sinful nature. In this manner, sin functions like a disease passed down from one human to the next. The human race is innately corrupted by sin, and despite our best efforts, we cannot free ourselves from its power.

Yet Jesus, arriving through a miraculous birth brought about by the Holy Spirit, is free from sin because of His holy divine nature. Because He is God in the flesh and cannot sin due to His holy nature, He lives a perfect, blameless life. This blameless life is what makes Jesus a viable offering to deal with our sin on our behalf. And because Jesus is God, He has the power to defeat death and rise from the grave, leaving our sin behind.

If Jesus were not God, He could not make a pure sacrifice on our behalf, and He would not have the power to defeat death itself.

Prayer:

Lord, Your Son is divine. May I recognize the wondrous uniqueness of Christ Jesus, and may He be glorified forevermore. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How should Jesus' divinity bring you great comfort?

DEVOTIONAL #3 – JESUS' HUMANITY

And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people.

(Luke 2:52, NASB 2020)

Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He was hungry.

(Luke 4:1-2, NASB 2020)

Jesus was a true human. He grew, He ate, He drank, He got hungry, He got tired, He laughed, He cried– in every way, Jesus was human.

The ancient heresy of Docetism sprung up in the first century and became enough of a problem that John responded to this false teaching in his letters! Docetism taught that Jesus was not actually human at all; believers of this heresy thought that Jesus only appeared to be human. These people thought it to be inconceivable for God Himself to truly take on flesh and tried to convince others that Jesus' human appearance was essentially a fancy illusion performed by God so that people could somewhat understand Him.

Jesus' humanity is critical in understanding the Father's redemptive plan for us. Paul describes Jesus as a "new Adam," essentially a new beginning for humanity. Whereas through Adam sin and death entered the world, through the new man Jesus grace and justification may come to sinners. In order for Jesus to bear our sin and serve as an appropriate representative in our place, Jesus must be human.

As the new human, Jesus shows us who we were made to be. Jesus stands strong against the lies and temptations of the enemy. He never once gives in to sin. Jesus is filled with love for His fellow human beings and lays down His life to save them. The Way of Jesus is the life that we were designed to live, and Jesus not only models that kind of life but makes it possible.

Jesus' humanity also makes Him relatable to us. Jesus knows joy and suffering. Jesus can laugh with you, mourn with you, celebrate with you, and suffer with you. He is not distant, unrelatable, or uncaring.

In order for Jesus to bear our sin and serve as an appropriate representative in our place, Jesus must be human.

Jesus is a true human who understands the human condition and bears it fully. As such a man, Jesus can comfort you in every situation for He knows what it is like to be in your shoes.

Prayer:

God, Your Son has made a way for a new humanity to be brought forth, that in Christ Jesus we may be born again. Thank You for the plan of redemption You have made for our sake. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does Jesus' humanity make Him relatable to you?

DEVOTIONAL #4 – THE CHRIST

He said to them, “But who do you yourselves say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 16:15-17, NASB 2020)

Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Crucify Him!” But he said, “Why, what evil has He done?” Yet they kept shouting all the more, saying, “Crucify Him!”

(Matthew 27:22-23, NASB 2020)

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

(1 Peter 3:21-22, NASB 2020)

The word “Christ” means “Anointed One.” Christ is not Jesus’ last name; it is a title. This title was understood by the Hebrew people to be a new king. This man would not just be any king, but this king would be chosen by God to redeem and rescue His people. This king would lead them back into prosperity and freedom. This king would conquer their enemies and secure Israel as its own self-governing kingdom once again.

Jesus came to be the Christ. He was deeply concerned with His kingdom and His kingdom, but Jesus intended on rescuing His people in a far different manner than many of them expected. The Hebrew people were looking for a king who could lead them into a military revolution against the Roman Empire, but Jesus did not view the Romans as His people’s ultimate enemy. Jesus understood sin and death to be His people’s ultimate enemy.

Through His ministry, Jesus revealed that the Kingdom of God looked far different than the kingdoms and empires of the earth. The Kingdom of God was a kingdom where the lowly are uplifted, the poor are provided for, and the weak are cared for and empowered. The Kingdom

of God was a kingdom filled with people not striving to gain power, but a kingdom comprised of people willingly laying down their power in service to one another. Jesus lived out these Kingdom principles in His life by lowering Himself to serve others, ultimately being expressed in His willingness to die on the cross for the ones He loved.

*Jesus lived out these
Kingdom principles
in His life by
lowering Himself
to serve others*

Jesus now rules and reigns alongside the Father as King over all creation. Because of His victory over sin and death, Jesus has planted Himself as the conquering King who rescues His people from the powers which truly kept them bound in darkness. We now are invited to follow Jesus into His Kingdom, one that will last forevermore.

Prayer:

May Christ Jesus rule for all eternity! God, remind me that I am a citizen of Your Kingdom, and I may I live as an ambassador to show the world what You and Your Kingdom are like. Amen.

Reflection Question:

Do you recognize that Jesus is your King? How should Jesus' kingship influence your day-to-day life?

DEVOTIONAL #5 – THE IMAGE OF GOD

“For the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ, and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.”

(Colossians 2:9-10, CSB)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”

(Colossians 1:15, CSB)

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

(Hebrews 1:3, CSB)

Jesus is a part of the trinity, but what does it mean that Jesus is the image of God? Colossians 2 tells us that “the entire fullness of God’s nature” is in Jesus. Jesus is “the exact expression of his (God) nature” (Hebrews 1:3). We can know who God is by knowing his Son who embodied the fullness of the Father. God the Father took on a physical form in Jesus, and as we study the life of Jesus in the pages of Scripture, we can know what God is like. We as humans are made in God’s image, but that image has been distorted by sin. Jesus came as the perfect image of God untainted by sin. In Jesus’ image we see that God is loving, kind, just, merciful, forgiving, and holy just to name a few of his attributes.

For those who are saved by Jesus, we too can have this fullness. Colossians 2:10, says that we have been filled by Jesus. The same power of God that filled Jesus fills those who are alive in Christ. As believers, this imaging is our identity. We are made in God’s image, and we can understand that image through knowing Jesus. Do our lives look like the image of God? Are we living life the way that Jesus lived? Scripture calls us to walk like Jesus walked.

*We as humans are made in God’s image,
but that image has been distorted by sin.*

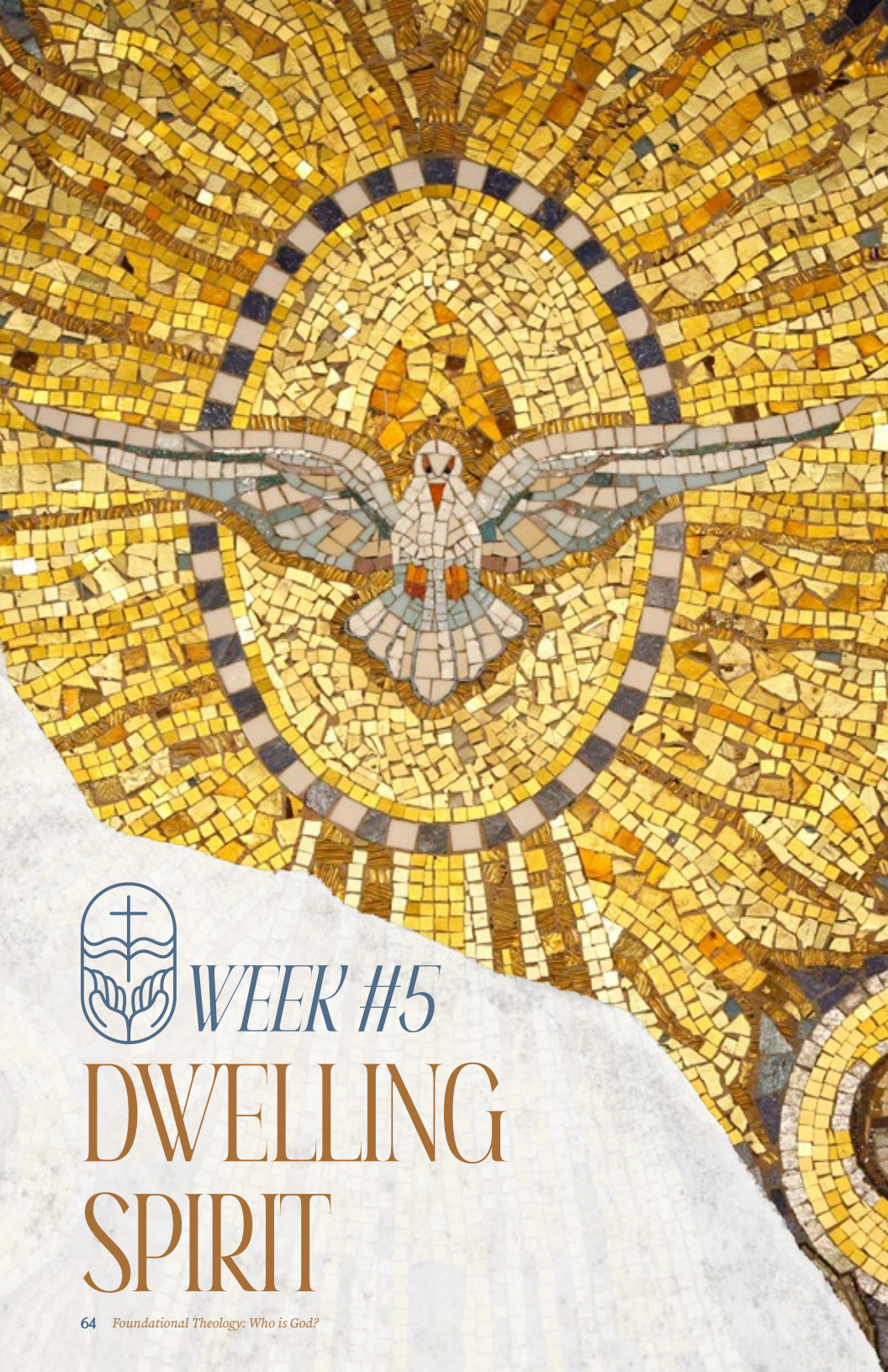
1 John 2:6 says, “The one who says he remains in Him (Jesus) should walk just as He walked”. God has given us everything we need to live a Godly life. He sent His son to take our place and be His perfect image so that we can walk with Him. In addition to giving us salvation, He gives us His Holy Spirit within us to guide us and help us become more like Christ. 2 Peter 1:3 says, “His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” Thank God that He has shown us Himself and that He has given us all that we need to live like Him!

Prayer:

God, may I image You well. You made me in Your image, but I have sinned against You. May I look to Christ Jesus as the perfect image of God, and may You mold me in the power of Your Holy Spirit to be like Christ and image You well. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does being made in the image of God grant all human beings the same innate value and worth?



WEEK #5

DWELLING SPIRIT

BIG IDEA #1 – TO DWELL WITHIN US

In John 14:17, Jesus promises His disciples that the Holy Spirit will dwell within them.

the Helper is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him; but you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you.

(John 14:17, NASB 2020)

The Holy Spirit is not a distant or vague force floating through the world. The Spirit is a personable being which dwells within the one who has faith in Christ. Just as the Son functions as a living tabernacle to bring God's presence to us, we are transformed into personal temples to house the presence of God via His Holy Spirit.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NASB 2020)

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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.

(Romans 8:9-11, NASB 2020)

Application:

Because the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we experience a complete and total life transformation. He convicts us of sin, empowers us for the work God has set before us, guides us according to the will of God, illuminates us to know the truth of God, and reminds us of God's presence with us.

Just as we should be comforted by the presence of the Holy Spirit, we should also be prompted to pursue holy living. If the Spirit of the Holy God dwells within us, why should we give our body over to sin? We must not act as hypocrites who claim to know God and then live contrary to the guiding way of the Spirit. What we do matters, and as people who have been given the gift of the Spirit, we must recognize that we are no longer alone as isolated individuals. The presence of God is with us, and our lives serve as representatives of that God.

BIG IDEA #2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT

We live in a spiritual world. God Himself is spirit, and we know through the Scriptures that God created the universe with a spiritual presence. God created spiritual beings such as angels, and some of these beings have rebelled against God and become demons (Genesis 6). Humans themselves are not purely physical, material beings but were created to be spiritual as well.

Nothing in the universe is purely physical. If God is spirit and created everything in the universe to glorify Him and know Him, then that means everything in the universe has a spiritual component.

Through the gift of the dwelling Holy Spirit, we not only know God in an intimate personal level, we also become more aware of the spiritual aspect of the world God made. In Ephesians, Paul writes that we wage war against the spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12). The Holy Spirit enables us to be aware of these forces and equips us for combat against them. The Holy Spirit is at work sanctifying us so that with each day we become more like God and adopt His holiness.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Romans 15:13, NASB 2020)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

(Ephesians 6:12, ESV)

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

(2 Corinthians 10:3-4, ESV)

*The Holy Spirit is
at work sanctifying
us so that with each
day we become
more like God and
adopt His holiness.*

Application:

With the Holy Spirit at work in us and for us, we never need to fear the enemies of God. We know that we have a helper who is shaping us and forming us into the likeness of Christ, and that helper is also helping us to be more aware of the spiritual world which we live in. We must daily be aware that nothing is purely physical, but that everything is spiritual and has a spiritual impact. We should be aware of the spiritual forces at work in this world and recognize that there is true evil working to twist God's creation against Him.

DEVOTIONAL #1 – OUR ADVOCATE

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever.”

(John 14:16, CSB)

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

(John 15:26, ESV)

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”

(John 16:7, ESV)

“In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because, we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us, with inexpressible groanings. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

(Romans 8:26-27, CSB)

"In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because, we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us"

The word advocate used in Scripture comes from the Greek word “parakletos.” Easton’s Bible Dictionary defines advocate (parakletos) as, “one who pleads another’s cause, who helps another by defending or comforting him. It is a name given by Christ three times to the Holy Ghost (John 14:16 ; 15:26 ; 16:7, where the Greek word is rendered “Comforter,” q.v.)”.

The disciples could not understand how Jesus leaving them could be good for them, but Jesus assured them in John 16 that it was to the disciples’ advantage that He leave them. Jesus assured the disciples that when He left, He would send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to dwell with them. 1 and 2 Corinthians testifies that the Holy Spirit is given to all believers to dwell in them and that we are sealed by the Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is the part of the triune Trinity that works within us as our guide, comforter, defender, and the one who brings conviction to us when we have sinned. The Spirit brings us peace in sorrow and joy in our celebrations.

Romans 8 teaches that the Spirit intercedes for us because the Spirit knows God’s will. Even when we do not know what we should pray or do, the Spirit intercedes for us when we are weak. We are given the gift of the Holy Spirit as our personal advocate that fights on our behalf and leads us in the ways we should go.

Prayer:

God, thank You for sending a helper to guide us through this life. Your great love is so evident in how You come near to us and guide us. May we never rely on our own strength, but on Yours Lord may we trust forevermore. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does the Holy Spirit function as your Advocate? Do you see how God through His Holy Spirit helps you each day?



DEVOTIONAL #2 – REGENERATION

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

(John 3:3-8, ESV)

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

(Ephesians 2:1-5, ESV)

Our sin not only leads us into physical death, but it causes us to be spiritually dead as well. Our God is the life giver, and if we are to know Him, we must be made alive again. We cannot know God in our deadness.

By the grace of God, He gives us new life through the work of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The term “regeneration” refers to the spiritual resurrection we experience when we are born again by the Holy Spirit. Coming to faith in Christ is not merely a work of mental exercise. When a person comes to true faith in Jesus, that moment of faith is the result of the Holy Spirit regenerating them.

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In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks about this kind of transformation when he says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV). The Holy Spirit performs a transforming work within us to make us new when we become one with Christ. This means that we actually experience two resurrections through the merciful redemption with God has won for us. We receive a spiritual resurrection now in this life which transforms us into a new creation set on a path of sanctification to daily grow in Christlikeness. This spiritual resurrection points us to the physical resurrection we will experience later leading us into eternal life.

Our God is the ultimate life giver. Just as He created the world in the beginning, He is at work breathing new life into the creation that had rebelled against Him! His life giving touch converts us from enemies to friends, from strangers to adopted children. Let us celebrate and glorify the God who has given us new life!

Prayer:

O Lord, You have given me new life! How wonderful You are! I am alive in Christ! Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does your life differ now in comparison to the life you lived before knowing Jesus?

DEVOTIONAL #3 – CHRISTIAN UNITY

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

(John 17:20-23, ESV)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

(Ephesians 4:1-3, ESV)

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment

(1 Corinthians 1:10, ESV)

God is deeply concerned with our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ. As God displays perfect unity within Himself in the Trinity, He wants us to experience intimate unity with one another.

Sin breaks the bond we have with one another and works to divide us against ourselves. Because of their sin, the people building the Tower of Babel had to be divided and they lost the ability to communicate and work together. However, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived to reverse what had occurred at the Tower of Babel and unify the people of God.

The Spirit of God is at work unifying people all across the world from different backgrounds, cultures, social statuses, etc. This unifying Spirit is a common bond which brings us together in harmony despite whatever differences we may have. Christian unity is a telltale sign that the Spirit of God is active in a community, and brutal disunity is a telltale sign that the people of that community are not following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

If we are all temples containing the same Spirit of God, how can we be divided against one another? The work of the Holy Spirit does not mean that we dismiss any differences we may have with one another. Rather, the Holy Spirit works to unite us together regardless of the differences which we have. If we are to faithfully follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, then we must do the hard work of being unified with one another in love despite the challenges and barriers that may arise to prevent such unity. Likewise, we must be quick to forgive one another, assume the best of one another, and be patient with one another, in order to foster healthy communities of unity in the Spirit.

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God desires to bring us not only to Himself, but to bring us into unity with one another. May we follow the Spirit's leading in such a manner as this.

Prayer:

Lord, make us one as You are one. Unify us in the power of Your Spirit that we would experience a Christlike love for one another. May the world see our unity and may they be drawn to You because of it. Amen.

Reflection Question:

How does the Holy Spirit connect us with our brothers and sisters all over the world? How does the Holy Spirit connect us with our brothers and sisters from the past and the future? How does the Holy Spirit connect us with our brothers and sisters from other denominations?

DEVOTIONAL #4 – FRUITFULNESS

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

(Galatians 5:22-26, ESV)

Many believers are familiar with the fruits of the Spirit, but we often have a misguided mindset on this common passage. The fruits are not called the ‘fruits of trying really hard’ or the ‘fruits on my best days’. The fruit that God wants us to bear is the good fruit that the Spirit works in us to produce. Proceeding verse 22, Paul lays out in Galatians what the fruits of the flesh are, which are contradictory to the good fruit God wants in us. Left to our own fleshly selves we do not want to live in line with what is good and righteous. We need the Holy Spirit at work in us to make us more like Christ and to bear the fruit of a godly life.

We often try to buckle down and do our best without relying on the work of the Spirit in us. In Galatians 5:16 Paul says, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh”. In order to not live by our flesh, we must walk by the Spirit. So, how do we walk with the Spirit? We must be spending time knowing God and His Word through study and prayer and continually asking God to fill us with more of His Spirit. As we grow in the Lord, we can trust that the Holy Spirit is continually growing us and doing the work of bearing good fruit.

We need the Holy Spirit at work in us to make us more like Christ and to bear the fruit of a godly life.

We often want fruit immediately, but this fruit takes time to bear. Just as a tree may take years before growing fruit, so too does our fruit bearing sometimes take a long process. We must not grow weary in the process, but trust that the Spirit is working beyond what we can see to do His good work in us.

Prayer:

Lord, You call us to bear fruit. May our lives be fertile ground for Your Spirit to plan wondrous seeds of Christlikeness in us. Use us according to Your plans O God that we would be fruitful according to Your will. Amen.

Reflection Question:

What fruit have you seen in your own life that is a direct result from the Holy Spirit's activity in your life?

DEVOTIONAL #5 – GIFT GIVER

“Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good: to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of tongues, to another, interpretation of tongues. One and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as he wills.”

(1 Corinthians 12: 4-11, CSB)

“So also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church.”

(1 Corinthians 14:12, CSB)

“And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.”

(Ephesians 4:11-13, CSB)

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

(Romans 12:6-8, NIV)

When we come to salvation in Christ, we are given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We have discussed the good fruit that the Spirit produces in us, but the Spirit also works in us to produce gifts. In Paul's letters he talks about different gifts that the Spirit gives believers, such as healing, prophecy, teaching, serving, encouragement, and many others.

Different church denominations and traditions have differing views on some of these gifts given by the Spirit, which we aren't going to delve into in this devotional, but we are going to focus on a particular theme Paul presents: the edification of the body. Scripture is clear that the Spirit gives different gifts to different believers, but why are these gifts given? Paul tells us that the gifts of the Spirit are given to believers for the purpose of building up and edifying the church. The Spirit gives differing gifts as He sees fit for the purpose of glorifying God and expanding His kingdom and work within the church. These gifts are not for selfish gain or conceit but are for building up our brothers and sisters and bringing honor to our Father. As we are sanctified in our walk with the Lord, our gifts should be growing and maturing by the work of the Spirit.

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We need the guidance of God's Spirit and Word, along with fellow believers to help us recognize our unique gifts. Along with recognizing our gifts, we need the Spirit, the Word, and fellow believers to help us discern the using of our gifts. We must continually come back to asking, "Is this edifying the church body?". Our heart in using our gifts should always first and foremost be to honor God and build up others. May we be believers who lay aside our fleshly selves and humbly submit our God given gifts for the honor and glory of His Kingdom!

Prayer:

What a wonderful gift giver You are Lord! May we never reject You by tossing away the gifts You have given us or using them for our own gain. May we be faithful and steady workers in Your Kingdom according to the gifts You have given us that You may be glorified now and forever. Amen.

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