



Essentials of Faith Study Guide*

We Believe. . .

God/Trinity

...there is only one God who is sovereign over all creation. God eternally coexists in three equal persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Bible.

Scripture References

Genesis 1:1 (NRSV)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,

Exodus 20:4-5 (NRSV)

4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me,

Deuteronomy 6:4 (NRSV)

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

Psalms 47:2 (NRSV)

2 For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome, a great king over all the earth.

Isaiah 45:5 (NRSV)

5 I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me,

Matthew 28:19 (NRSV)

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Luke 1:35 (NRSV)

35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

John 14:26 (NRSV)

26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

Romans 1:23 (NRSV)

23 and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

Romans 8:28 (NRSV)

28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

2 Corinthians 13:13 (NRSV)

13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of

* These essentials are the core beliefs of the Christian Faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith is a confessional statement of orthodox Presbyterianism.

you.

Ephesians 1:7-11 (NRSV)

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight

9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,

Jude 25 (NRSV)

25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Revelation 4:11 (NRSV)

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Confessions

Nicene Creed 1.1, 1.3

Scots Confession 3.01

Heidelberg Catechism 4.027

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.011-6.014

Larger Catechism 7.01

Brief Statement of Faith 10.1

Reflections Questions

1. What relevance does the doctrine of trinity have?
2. Is Christianity's revelation of God fundamentally in harmony with or different from other major religions?
3. What does it mean that God is sovereign over all creation?

Jesus Christ

...Jesus Christ alone is Lord of all and the way of salvation. He is the living Word of God, the perfect image of the invisible God—fully God and fully human.

Scripture References

Matthew 1:23 (NRSV)

23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

Luke 1:31-35 (NRSV)

31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

John 1:1-3 (NRSV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

John 1:14-18 (NRSV)

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ")

16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Romans 5:18-19 (NRSV)

18 Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.
19 For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NRSV)

19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

Colossians 1:15-20 (NRSV)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;
16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.
17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.
19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

1 Timothy 2:5 (NRSV)

5 For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human,

Hebrews 1:1-3 (NRSV)

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets,
2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.
3 He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

1 John 4:2-4 (NRSV)

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,
3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.
4 Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Confessions

Nicene Creed 1.1-1.2

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.044

Confession of 1967 9.07-9.08

Brief Statement of Faith 10.2

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean that Jesus is "Lord"?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is fully God and fully human?
3. How important is Jesus to the church's worship, proclamation, life and mission?

Authority of Scripture

...the Bible is the only infallible and inerrant written Word of God, inspired by Holy Spirit, and is the first and final authority in faith and life.

Scripture References

Matthew 4:4 (NRSV)

4 But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NRSV)

13 We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NRSV)

16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Confessions

Second Helvetic Confession 5.001, 5.003, 5.010

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.006, 6.009

Larger Catechism 7.113-114

Reflection Questions

1. Explain the authority of Scripture in your own words?
2. What are other sources of authority? How do they compare to scripture?
3. Inerrant, infallible, trustworthy, authoritative—is there a good word or phrase that best describes for you the inspiration and authority of Scripture?

Humanity/Original Sin

...humanity is created in the image of God to know, love, obey and worship Him. Humanity freely chose to disobey this created purpose, separating us from God and bringing sin and death into the world. Every aspect of the human person is completely broken by sin and no human effort can fully resolve or redeem this defect.

Scripture References

Genesis 1:26-27 (NRSV)

26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Psalms 51:5 (NRSV)

5 Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

Psalms 143:2 (NRSV)

2 Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NRSV)

9 The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse— who can understand it?

Matthew 15:19-20 (NRSV)

19 For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.

20 These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

Romans 3:10-23 (NRSV)

¹⁰ as it is written: "There is no one who is righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one." ¹³ "Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of vipers is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ ruin and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been

disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets,²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction,²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;

Romans 5:18-19 (NRSV)

¹⁸ Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹ For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 7:18-23 (NRSV)

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self,²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Romans 8:7 (NRSV)

⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot,

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NRSV)

You were dead through the trespasses and sins² in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient.³ All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.03

Heidelberg Catechism 4.005, 4.006, 4.010

Larger Catechism 7.135, 7.137

Confession of 1967 9.12-13

Brief Statement of Faith 10.3

Reflection Questions

1. What does "total depravity" mean?
2. How would you describe the human situation?
3. What is the origin of Sin?

Atonement

...we were created for eternal life which is the free and gracious gift of God. This life is made possible by the once-and-for-all sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Jesus defeated the power of death and paid the penalty for our sins so that we might once again be in right relationship with God. The salvation that God offers is only given by grace and received by faith that Jesus is Lord and Savior for

Scripture References

Matthew 1:21 (NRSV)

²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Romans 3:25 (NRSV)

²⁵ whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed;

1 Corinthians 1:23-25 (NRSV)

²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

1 Corinthians 2:2 (NRSV)

² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 15:3 (NRSV)

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NRSV)

¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NRSV)

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Galatians 3:13 (NRSV)

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—

Galatians 6:14 (NRSV)

¹⁴ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Ephesians 1:19-23 (NRSV)

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Hebrews 9:11-12 (NRSV)

¹¹ But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), ¹² he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

1 Peter 3:18 (NRSV)

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,

1 John 2:2 (NRSV)

² and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.09

Heidelberg Catechism 4.031, 4.037

Confession of 1967 9.09

Reflection Questions

1. What is your understanding of the atoning work of Christ?
2. How central is the death and resurrection of Jesus to the Christian message?
3. How does the death and resurrection of Christ accomplish our salvation?

Holy Spirit/Sanctification

...the Holy Spirit moves us to accept the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and compels us to be conformed into the image of God. The Holy Spirit continually works to renew our minds and increasingly transforms us toward a life of holiness, justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

Scripture References

Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Romans 8:29 (NRSV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.

1 Corinthians 1:2 (NRSV)

²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

1 Corinthians 6:11 (NRSV)

¹¹And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 5:22-25 (NRSV)

²²By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Philippians 2:12-13 (NRSV)

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NRSV)

¹³But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.12

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.075-6.077

Shorter Catechism 7.035

Larger Catechism 7.188

Reflection Questions

1. What is holiness?
2. Is it possible to attain moral and spiritual perfection in our present life?
3. Are the miraculous gifts of the Spirit listed in scripture available to the church today?

Mission of the Church

...the redeeming and reconciling work of Jesus in the world continues through the Church, the body of Christ. We are commanded by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the Gospel by loving God, loving our neighbor, and making all people disciples of Jesus.

Scripture References

Matthew 9:36-38 (NRSV)

³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (NRSV)

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Acts 1:8 (NRSV)

⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Romans 10:13-15 (NRSV)

¹³For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” ¹⁴But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

2 Peter 3:10-13 (NRSV)

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and

the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.¹¹ Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness,¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?¹³ But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Confessions

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.058
Confession of 1967 9.06, 9.43, 9.44-9.46

Reflection Questions

1. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. “What does the promotion of social righteousness have to do with the church’s mission?”
3. What right do we have telling people of other religions to believe in Jesus?

Evil

...evil exists in the world and is personified in Satan, our accuser. He is at enmity with God and exists to deceive all people. God is sovereign over all and is greater than all the evil forces in the world.

Scripture References

Matthew 25:41 (NRSV)

⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;

Luke 10:18 (NRSV)

¹⁸ He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.

John 8:44 (NRSV)

⁴⁴ You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Acts 13:10 (NRSV)

¹⁰ and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?”

Acts 26:18 (NRSV)

¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

Romans 16:20 (NRSV)

²⁰ The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1 Corinthians 7:5 (NRSV)

⁵ Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)

¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,

Revelation 12:10 (NRSV)

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Revelation 20:10 (NRSV)

¹⁰ And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Confessions

The Scots Confession 3.03

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.031, 6.029, 6.031, 6.096, 6.108, 6.112
Shorter Catechism 7.102,
Larger Catechism 7.131, 7.158, 7.162, 7.215, 7.301, 7.305

Reflection Questions

1. How does the problem of evil relate to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God?
2. Does Satan have power over us?
3. Are there demon possessions in the world today?

Stewardship

...we are called to live a life of holiness and to be faithful stewards of God's creation. We accomplish this through the generous and obedient use of our spiritual gifts, time, talents, and resources all to the glory of God.

Scripture References

Psalm 24:1 (NRSV)

¹Of David. A Psalm. The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;

Romans 12:1 (NRSV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

1 Corinthians 4:7 (NRSV)

⁷For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?

Titus 2:14 (NRSV)

¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

1 Peter 4:8-11 (NRSV)

⁸Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ¹¹Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Confessions

Larger Catechism 7.251

Confession of 1967 9.46

Brief Statement of Faith 10.33, 10.38

Reflection Questions

1. *Christ against Culture, Christ over culture, Christ transforming culture*, which is these is a distinctively reformed?
2. What does it mean to be a steward?
3. What does holiness and stewardship have in common?