### Preface

The Christian faith is deeply relational. God is a Relational Being and he created us as relational beings with a capacity for relationship with Him and each other. Every subject in Scripture is grounded in relationship. God experiences *intimate relationship* within the Trinity; Jesus’ work has *established*
relationship with God; the Holy Spirit cultivates a behavior conducive for relationship; the Church is about relationships; angels are our “big brothers” in creation and we have special relationship with them; sin hurts relationship with God and each other; Satan destroys relationships; death separates people in relationship; heaven is about eternal relationships, and hell is about a separation of relationships. This theological paradigm is not only deepening but thrilling. As relational beings, the greatest experience of all is relationships. Within the faith of Christianity the experience of relationship is profound and infinite.

C.S. Lewis observed that is his early years in the church he was served only “the dry husks of Christianity.” This unfortunately, along with other factors, led to his atheism and a loss of years in an opportunity to grow and deepen as a human being. It is imperative for every believer to get beyond the “dry husks” and move into the profound reality of this thrilling faith.

The Christian faith is a stunning reality. It’s depths are infinite. After years of study and living out this faith, I find myself ever deepening. I believe this is the only direction for God's people both in our understanding and experience of the faith. Going deeper and finding oneself changed in every dimension of human existence—intellectually, relationally, morally, emotionally, sexually, vocationally, physically.

One way of probing the depths of Christianity is by climbing the mountain peaks of the faith. These mountain peaks are the themes that comprise systematic theology—God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Scripture, Angels, Satan & Demons, Church, Sin, Man, Rigtheousness, Last Things. If you ascend each one of these doctrinal peaks, you’ll find the view absolutely breathtaking. The advantage in perspective is enormous.

I do hope you will find yourself ever thrilled as you ponder each Scripture building a full view on each of these realities of the Christian faith. So I commend you to this approach. Probe the depths of biblical Christianity and find yourself ever deepened to His glory.

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“There lies a truth so real and so pristine that all of man’s concocted philosophical posings tumble into ruin beside it.” Douglas H. Gresham
Systematic Theology

Systematic Theology is the discipline of identifying and organizing all of the Scriptures in the Bible on any given subject, and through a systematic approach discovering and learning all one can on various topics or doctrines.

Systematic theology is humbly dependent upon other disciplines. These include exegesis, which discerns the meaning of each text; biblical theology, which gives understanding from the historical-redemptive process of particular themes—how a doctrine developed in the Bible; and historical theology, which gives a perspective on how elements of truth have been formulated and developed in history.

Systematic theology makes two assumptions: 1) People are reasoning beings who can use rationality in an approach to Scripture to apprehend God; and 2) there is harmony and coherence in Scripture about God and His unveiling revelation.

The Bible is not arranged with a systematic approach, however there is a unity of God and a consistency in his work of redemption through history. Some writers in the Bible take a systematic approach focusing on themes for an entire book (e.g., Jesus identity as the Son of God in Mark) or a chapter (e.g., love in 1 Corinthians 13, faith in Hebrews 11).

History of Systematic Theology

Early Church Fathers Theological systematization can be traced back to the early church fathers. The writings of Tertullian, Origen, and Athanasius focused on particular doctrines. The early church creeds were attempts to systematize Christianity. Most of these writings were confined to the development and defense of particular doctrines (e.g., the Trinity), and this approach continued until the 13th century.

Medieval Scholasticism Systematic theology as it is practiced today finds its roots in Thomas Aquinas who developed philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Greater elaborations followed. The method involved starting with a philosophical question and proceeding to provide an answer. Theological speculation (e.g., did Adam have a navel, how many angels could dance on the head of a pin) provided an approach to developing treatments on the doctrine of creation, the existence of God, the nature of man, and the difference between the spiritual and material world.

The Reformers Reformers during the 16th century took a different approach. They develop a systematic theology based on biblical texts.
Positions were developed and the proof-texts were utilized to back up the assertion. This approach lasted until the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.

**Modernity and Postmodernity** Systematic theology from the 19\textsuperscript{th} century to now is largely practiced among conservatives because of the strong belief in the authority of Scripture. This approach challenges today’s religious emphasis on comparative religion, ecumenicism (all faiths are equal, provide truth, and are relativistic), and postmodernism (the misguided assertion that there are no absolute truths).

Throughout church history, systematic theology has emerged out of particular faith communities, from interactions between denominations, in response to the challenges of culture and false religion, and by events in society.

The approach of systematic theology is certainly fallible, yet it is compelled to search the infallible truth of Scripture. So there is a confidence to pursue the text knowing that our acquiring of truth builds.
"Without a doubt the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God."  A.W. Tozer

“Living becomes an awesome business when you realize that you spend every moment of your life in the sight and company of an omniscient, omnipresent Creator.”  J.I. Packer

“God loves us the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way.”  Leighton Ford

“If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.  If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it.  He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning.  Whenever you want to talk, He’ll listen.  He can live anywhere in the universe, but he choose your heart…Face it, He’s crazy about you!”  Max Lucado

“You take the pen, and the lines dance.  You take the flute, and the notes shimmer.  You take the brush, and the colors sing.  So all things have meaning and beauty in that space beyond time where you are.  How, then can I hold back anything from you?”  Dag Hammarskjold, Markings

Instructions for marking your Bible: Underline with an orange pen/pencil from this section the verses or portion of a verse which deals with God.  When you have marked/read all of the verses in a sub-section, check ☑ the square.

How incumbent it is upon us to know the very God who created us. Hosea 6.3 urges, “Oh, that we might know the Lord!  Let us press on to know Him!  Then he will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or coming of rains in early spring.”  Some of the significant reasons to know God include the following:

1. **Relationship**  You were made for God.  It is utterly thrilling to be in relationship with the true God (Ps. 92.4 NLT).  You were not made for myths about God but only for the true and living God (1 Ch. 17.20; Isa. 45.22).  The best things can only happen to you (filled with the Spirit, touched by His love, transformed into His glory, growth, wisdom) when your are connected to the true God (vs. a mythological god).  It is amazing to realize we have a future with this God (Jn. 17.3).
2. **Apologetic** (Isa. 32.6; 1 Pet. 3.15) Every theological heresy begins with a distortion of who God is. So knowing truth about God is critical in sharing the faith in a culture where are so many distortions about God (e.g., Mormonism—God is an exalted man, New Age—god is all and all is god or what is called pantheism).

3. **Evangelistic** (2 Cor. 5.18-20) One poll found that 74% of Americans desire a closer relationship with God. People would be astounded to learn of the love of God, that He is “Abba Father,” that His entire desire has been for each person to have a relationship with Him that would go on forever.

**God's Nature/Being**

There are the **communicable attributes** (things about God we can reasonably understand because of partial counterpart within human beings made in God’s image) and **incommunicable attributes** of God (unique things about God we cannot understand at this point in our journey of life, e.g., God as one who has always existed) (Ps. 145.3 CEV; Isa. 55.8,9).

- **There is Only One God**  
  - OT: Ex. 8.10; Dt. 4.35,39; 2 Sam. 7.22; Ps. 83.18; Isa. 44.6,8; 45.5,6,14,18,21,22; 46.9 / NT: Mk. 12.29,32; Gal. 3.20; Eph. 4.6; 1 Tim. 1.17; 2.5; 6.15; Jam. 2.19; 4.12; Jude 1.15

**God in Three Persons**  
God lives in community. God is One and yet within the Godhead there are three distinct Persons—God the Father, God the Son/Word, and God the Holy Spirit. They co-exist in eternity. All through Scripture you see the three mention in profound concert (Mt. 28.18-20; Eph. 1.17; 2.18). There are thrilling theological perspectives on this Triune God. **First**, they are relational Beings. **Second**, they experience absolute intimacy. **Third**, they work and exist in absolute unity (Jn. 17).

- **God is Spirit**  
  - OT: Dt. 4.12,15 / NT: Jn. 4.24; Col. 1.15; 1 Tim. 1.17; 6.16; Heb. 11.27 "Him who is invisible"

- **God is an intellectual Being**  
  - Ps. 19.1ff; 65.8 NLT; 147.5

- **God is Eternal/Self-Existing**  
  - OT: 1 Ch. 16.36; Ps. 102.12,27; 145.13; Isa. 44.6; Habk. 1.12a / NT: Rom. 1.20; Eph. 3.21; 1 Tim. 1.17; 6.16

- **God is Perfect**  
  - OT: Dt. 32.4; Ps. 18.30 / NT: Mt. 5.48; Jam. 1.17

**Character of God**

- **Compassion**  
  - OT: Dt. 13.17; Neh. 9.19; Ps. 77.9; 90.13; Isa. 49.10; Jer. 12.15; Lam. 3.22; Hos. 11.8 / NT: 2 Cor. 1.3; Jam. 5.11c
Holiness ☐ OT: Ex. 15.11; Lev. 19.2; Ps. 22.3; Isa. 6.1-5; Hab. 1.13a / NT: Lk. 1.49; Jn. 17.11; Heb. 12.29; 1 Pet. 1.15,16; Rev. 4.8; 15.4

Love ☐ OT: Dt. 7.7,8,13; 1 Ch. 16.34; Ps. 32.10; 36.7; 42.8; 62.12a; 63.3; 86.5; 103.17; 108.4; 145.8,17; Jer. 31.3 / NT: Jn. 3.16; 16.27; Rom. 5.5,8; 8.38,39; Eph. 2.4,5; Ti. 3.4,5; Heb. 12.6; 1 Jn. 3.1; 4.8b

Mercy ☐ OT: Dt. 4.31; Neh. 9.31; Ps. 78.38; Isa. 63.9; Dan. 9.9; Mic. 7.18 / NT: Lk. 1.50; Rom. 9.16,23; Eph. 2.4; Heb. 4.16; Jam. 5.11; 1 Pet. 1.3

Patience, Long Suffering, Slow to Anger ☐ OT: Num. 14.18; Ps. 78.38; 103.8,10; Hos. 11.9 / NT: Rom. 2.4; 9.22; 2 Pet. 3.9

Righteousness/Good ☐ OT: Job 4.17; 37.23; Ps. 11.7; 25.8; 36.6; 89.14; 92.15; 106.1; 119.137; 129.4; 145.17 / NT: Jn. 17.25; 2 Tim. 4.8 "the Righteous Judge"

God and His People

God's Involvement with His People ☐

Clearly the Bible has a high-view of God’s involvement with people. For instance, Zephaniah 3.17 (NLT): “For the Lord your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will exult over you by singing a happy song.” How sad that many have embraced a low-view which then diminishes the level of relationship they experience. Notice how thoroughly God is involved with His people.

- God guides and leads ☐ OT: Ex. 34.14b “…for He is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you” (NLT); 13.21; 15.13; Dt. 32.10,12; Ps. 5.8; 23.2,3; 25.5,9; 31.3b “For the sake of your name lead me and guide me”; 37.23,24; 48.14; 73.24; Isa. 58.11 / NT: Jn. 10.3,4; 2 Cor. 2.14; 1 Th. 3.11
- God teaches ☐ OT: Ps. 16.7; 32.8; 51.6; 71.17; 143.10 / NT: 1 Jn. 2.27
- God disciplines ☐ OT: Ps. 94.12; Pr. 3.11 / NT: Heb. 12.5-11; Rev. 3.19
- God searches and strengthens the heart ☐ OT: 1 Kgs. 8.39; 2 Ch. 16.9; Ps. 7.9; Pr. 15.11; 17.3; Jer. 11.20 / NT: Mt. 6.4,8,18,32; Ac. 1.24; 15.8; 1 Th. 2.4; Heb. 4.13
- God observes a person's life ☐ OT: 2 Ch. 16.9; Ps. 103.14 / NT: Mt. 10.29,30; 1 Cor. 8.3

God's Attitude Toward Humanity ☐
• God loves people  OT: Ps. 86.5 / NT: Jn. 3.16; Rom. 5.8
• God hates evil/sin in people's lives  OT: Pr. 3.32; 6.16; 15.9, 26, 29; 16.5a
• God wants to have a relationship with people  OT: Ezk. 33.11 / NT: Ac. 17.30; 1 Tim. 2.4; Ti. 2.11
• God desires for all people to live with Him eternally  NT: Jn. 3.16; 1 Tim. 2.3-6; 2 Pet. 3.9
• God is for the good of His people  OT: Ps. 84.11b

Personal Notes: