

# Our Great Cloud of Witnesses: A History of the Church and Her Beliefs

## Taught By: Craig Meek

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### Overview

We will survey major points in Christians History, doctrines, and the surrounding controversies. This includes the following doctrines: Trinity, Christology, Sin-Grace, Sacraments, and Revelation-Reason. Additionally, the main historical movements include the first century, the Council of Nicaea, the Definition of Chalcedon, and the Reformation.

### Goals

The overall goal is a deeper knowledge of God and of human understanding of God, conditioned by Scripture and the theology of Church. More specifically, the goals are the following:

- Appreciation for theological reflection.
- Gaining knowledge of basic moments in Christian History.
- Consider how our setting in a western, developed world influences how we understand Scripture and doctrines.
- Articulating basic doctrines.
- Evaluating and articulating your faith.

### Requirements

Required participation:

1. Attend classes
2. Accomplish the readings *prior* to class dates
3. Participate in discussion

### Evaluation

We will evaluate the class at the end with a celebration of some sort TBD.

### Materials

**Book:** *Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* by Michael Reeves.  
Available on Amazon for around \$10.

**Handouts and Additional readings** provided

### Milestones

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#### First 2 classes:

The formation of the Church led to specific controversies addressed by councils, which led to doctrinal formation.

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#### Second 2 classes:

Address the problem of Redemption and sin as it relates the person of Jesus Christ as the councils of the Patristic era.

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#### Final 3 classes:

Look at the Reformation as a historical event, the main persons and doctrines, and the problems presented Christianity as the world turned "modern."

# Class Dates and Required Reading

## May 4<sup>th</sup> (approx. 67 pages)

Reading: From *The Birth of the Church* by Ivor J. Davidson. "In the Beginning" & "The World of Jesus' First Followers" (*handout provided*)

Discussion Topic: First Century World, Organizing the Church, and early Creeds

People: Irenaeus, Marcian, Tertullian, Justin Martyr

## May 11<sup>th</sup> (approx. 32 pages)

Reading: From *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* by Mark A. Noll. "Realities of the Empire: The Council of Nicaea (325)" (*Handout Provided*)

Additional: From *Faith Seeking Understanding* by Daniel L. Migliore. "The Triune God," pages 70-85 (*Handout Provided*)

Discussion Topic: The Doctrine of the Trinity

People: Athanasius, Arius, Augustine

## May 18<sup>th</sup> (approx. 19 pages)

Reading: From *Faith Seeking Understanding* by Daniel L. Migliore. "Humanity as creature, sinner, and new being in Christ." (*Handout Provided*)

Additional: Selections from the Book of Confessions & Augustine (*Handout Provided*)

Discussion Topic: Humanity, sin, and grace.

## May 25<sup>th</sup> (approx. 53 pages)

Reading: From *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* by Mark A. Noll. "Doctrine, Politics, and Life in the World: The Council of Chalcedon" (*Handout Provided*)

Additional: From *Faith Seeking Understanding* by Daniel L. Migliore. "The Person and Work of Jesus Christ" (*Handout Provided*)

## May 25<sup>th</sup> (cont.)

Discussion Topic: The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

People: Cappadocian Fathers, John Calvin, Scottish Theologians

## June 1<sup>st</sup> (approx. 60 pages)

Reading: *Unquenchable Flame* (UF): "Going Medieval on Religion," chapter 1 & "God's Volcano: Martin Luther," chapter 2.

Additional: Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (in anticipation of the following week.). *Handout provided*

Discussion Topic: Reformation as a Historical Event. Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, Sacraments

## June 8<sup>th</sup> (approx. 70 pages)

Reading: UR: "Soldiers, sausages, and revolution," chapter 3 & "After darkness, light: John Calvin," chapter 4

Additional: Selections from Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (*Handout Provided*)

Discussion Topic: John Calvin

## June 15<sup>th</sup>

Reading: None.

Discussion Topic: Modern Theology and the Crisis of Reason