



# John Calvin's *Institutes in the Christian Religion* (1541)

A PPA Seminar: Fall 2017

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## Study 1: Prefatory Letter and Chapter One

### Prefatory Letter to Francis I (Read pgs. xvii-28)

*"...We have nothing of which we can boast before God except His mercy alone, by which through no merit of our own, we are saved (2 Cor. 10:17-18; Titus 3:5). Nor can we boast of anything before men except our weakness, which all men regard as a mark of deep disgrace (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5, 9)."*

1. What were Calvin's primary reasons for writing the *Institutes*? What does this reveal about the man?
2. How would you characterize Calvin's tone in his letter to the king?
3. How does Calvin wisely and biblically remind the king of his high calling before God?
4. How does Calvin's knowledge of the Church Fathers specifically counter Roman Catholicism's false claims concerning the reformers?
5. From your reading of the prefatory letter, what are the two primary differences between Roman Catholic teaching, and the teaching of Calvin's *Institutes*?
  - a. Concerning Scripture:
  - b. Concerning the Church:
6. In the conclusion of the letter, why do you think Calvin appeals to the Gospel good works of the true reformers?

## **The Knowledge of God – Part 1 (Chap. 1)**

*“The whole sum of our wisdom—wisdom, that is, which deserves to be called true and assured—broadly consists of two parts, knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves.”*

### **Scripture Reading/Meditation/Memorization: Romans 1:18-25**

1. Where are the arguments for the existence of God at the beginning of the Institutes? What might this teach you about Calvin and his theology? [pg. 1]
2. What is the purpose of the knowledge of God? [pg. 1]
3. What is the purpose of the knowledge of ourselves? [pg. 1]
4. Why is self-knowledge impossible without a knowledge of God? [pgs. 2-3]
5. How is an awareness of God common to all mankind? [pgs. 3-5]
6. What are some specific examples of this common awareness of God to all? [pgs. 3-5]
7. Why does the “seed of religion” in all mankind not sprout up and grow into true knowledge of God? [pgs. 5-8]

### **Terms/Implications/Applications**

Duplex Cognitio

Two Covenantal Circles

Divinitatis Sensum/ Sensus Divinitatis

Horror ille et stupor

Semen Religionis

Natural Revelation

Natural Theology

Covenant Epistemology