

"What We Believe"

Session 1

God Is Studied: Doctrine/Theology

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The reason for studying Christian Doctrine is so we can **BUILD** a solid foundation based on the truth of God's Word: **ENCOUNTER** Jesus through those truths; **LIVE** out those truths within our lives; and be able to **SHARE** Jesus confidently within the culture in which we live. We are studying Christian Doctrine so that we can **Build, Encounter, Live and Share**.
- B. The main way to understand Christian Doctrine is through a life committed to reading the Bible daily. It's not enough to read books, listen to sermons and hear other's thoughts about Christian Doctrine and Theology. You must read what God has said about Himself within the Bible.
- C. Many of us struggle to **ENCOUNTER** Jesus regularly because we have failed to **BUILD** a solid foundation of right beliefs about the God of the Bible. Instead of God being able to encounter you, you fight Him. You might ask, how do we fight God?
- D. When He says that He loves us right where we are, we say that not's fair, I'm dirty. You don't really love me. When He comes to tell us the truth, we don't repent because we would rather do what we're doing. We fail to understand that He loves us and knows more than us, and He is looking out for us. When we suffer, we become bitter toward God because we don't see Jesus at work in our life or the connection between us and His Son Jesus, who also suffered at the hands of His own creation, and was killed, not being delivered from death on a cross. When He comes and says He wants to use us, we tell Him no, and remind Him of our past. When we fall into sin, we run from God, not to God, because we see an angry God who is ready to punish us. When He comes to us as a loving Father, we don't let Him in close because we likened Him to our earthly father who didn't treat us well.
- E. It's important that within this series when you come up against something that you believed and it is contrary to the Bible that you abandon your belief and agree with the Bible. This doesn't mean that you take my word as God's word, but that you take God's word as God's word.
- F. This series "Doctrine" is not geared toward Christian behavior, but toward Christian thought.

II. What Is Theology and What Is Doctrine?

- A. The word Doctrine appears 51 times, and the word Doctrines appears 5 times in the Bible. Sixteen of those references are in what is called the Pastoral Epistles (letters) of **1st and 2nd Timothy** and **Titus**.
- B. Though the Bible is made up of many types of writings, such as: law, history, poetry and prophecy; it has an underlying and flowing theme of sound theology.
- C. The word Theology is made up of two Greek words, "Theos" which means (God) and "Logos" which means (words). So Theology is words about God.

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- D. **1st Timothy 4:16** says **“take heed to yourself and unto the doctrine of God and continue in them, for in doing this you shall both save yourself and those that hear you.”** Paul challenges Timothy with the reality that the Doctrine that he has given him, is powerful enough to save both his soul and anyone who will listen to him. That is putting a strong emphasis on the importance of sound Doctrine.
- E. The word Doctrine means: something taught; teachings; instructions; or a set of specific instructions.
- F. Theology refers primarily to the knowledge of God’s truth, and religion refers to the practice of that knowledge. For us to grow in Christ, these two must be constantly applied within our lives. Jesus said in **John 13:17** **“if you know My words (Theology) happy are you if you do them (Practice or Religion).”** It is both knowing Theology and doing Theology that brings about the work of God in our lives.
- G. The word Religion comes from a Latin word meaning to bind. Religion is to bind man to God in relationship. Theology is the knowledge of God and religion is its practice. So we want to become religious with our Theology, meaning that we practice what we preach, or we do what we hear.
- H. We can call the doctrines of the Bible as laid out in a systematic way: the study of Theology. We call that science, because of the logical and systematic way in which it is laid out for us to understand.
- I. The doctrines of the Bible can be much like a grocery store on freight day. When all those groceries come into the store, multiple isles are all bundled into one really tall pallet. This means that each pallet must be broken down and each item is then separated into groups that go on specific isles. Though it is a poor comparison, the Bible in the same way, comes jammed packed into 66 books (a pallet) that must then be broken down into groups or sections (isles) so that each doctrine can be looked at as a part of the whole. The doctrine of God for instance isn’t the only doctrine of the Bible. It is a part, but that part is not necessarily the whole. The whole is made up of many parts.
- J. These are the various Doctrines I will cover in this series; *Doctrine, Trinity, Revelation, Creation, Image, Fall, Covenant, Incarnation, Cross, Holy Spirit, Church, Worship, Stewardship, Angels and Demons and the yet coming Kingdom.*
- K. God is not confined to a few doctrinal or theological statements. It has pleased God to reveal Himself in the 66 books of the Bible and not just in a few doctrinal or theological statements.

III. Why Doctrine?

- A. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, told us in **2nd Timothy 4:2-5** that there was coming a time when people wouldn’t endure sound doctrine about God, but would leave the truth for lies and fables. Today there is a great turning away from the doctrines of God to the ideas of man and doctrines of demons.
- B. Here are some common statements when it comes to doctrine from both inside and outside the Church.
 - a. The church doesn’t need doctrine, because doctrine is always divisive.

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1. Doctrine has actually existed before the Church existed. The Church doesn't create doctrine, God did. It is the people who reject the doctrines of God that create division. Many that have problems with certain doctrine or neglect certain doctrines are among those that create division within the Church.
- b. It doesn't matter what you believe, it only matters who you believe.
 1. The answer is this, it is impossible to separate Christ from His doctrine, for we have doctrine because we have Christ. You cannot accept Christ and reject His doctrine, for they are one and the same.
- c. Doctrine is dull and dry and experience is more important than good doctrine.
 1. This is also a partial truth. Just because the teacher who taught the doctrine was boring that doesn't mean that the subject itself was boring or dead. And we can love our doctrine so much that we never actually experience it, or we can love our experience so much that we don't ever learn to love doctrine. We want both a love for doctrine and a love for experiencing it.

IV. Why Do We Need Doctrine?

- A. In an hour where there seems to be no absolutes, it is vital that we understand that God has many absolutes.
- B. This is an hour in which all believers need to know who they believe—what they believe—and why they believe.
- C. What you believe is either founded upon the ideas of man, or the sure doctrines of Jesus Christ. False teaching can only be corrected by the Word of God (**1st John 4:1-6**).
- D. All doctrine proceeds from one of three sources: man, God or Satan. We can see this clearly laid out in Matthew 16:13-23 as we see all three taking place in one conversation.
 - i. The thought of man (**Matthew 16:13-14**)
 1. This is where the people thought that Jesus was either Jeremiah, Elijah or one of the prophets. Though this thinking wasn't evil, it was without divine inspiration.
 - b. The thought of God (**Matthew 16:16-17**)
 1. This is where Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ. This was the God thought.
 - c. The thought of Satan (**Matthew 16:21-23**)
 1. This is where Peter, who just moments ago spoke by divine revelation from the Father, and now is speaking on behalf of Satan.
- E. This illustration tells us that man's thoughts are open for three general sources of thought and this is why we must test every thought in the light of the written Word of God (**1st John 4:1**).

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V. The Doctrine of God

A. Doctrine of God.

- a. **Deut. 32:2** My doctrine shall drop as the rain...
- b. **Prov. 4:2** I give you good doctrine...
- c. **Isa. 29:24** They erred in spirit...and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.
- d. **1st Tim. 6:1** That the name of God and His doctrine not be blasphemed.
- e. **1st Tim 6:3** The doctrine which is according to godliness.
- f. **Titus 2:10** That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

B. The doctrine of Christ.

- a. **Hebrews 6:1** The first principles of the doctrine of Christ.
- b. **Matthew 7:28** They were astonished at His doctrine.
- c. **2nd John 9** Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

C. The Doctrine of the Apostles.

- a. The Apostles doctrine is found in **Acts 2:42**.
 - b. Within **Hebrews 6:1-2** we have a brief but comprehensive summary of the Apostles doctrine, from justification unto perfection. They are listed here in their progressive order.
 - c. The doctrine of repentance from dead works
 - d. The doctrine of faith toward God
 - e. The doctrine of baptisms
 - f. The doctrine of laying on of hands
 - g. The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead
 - h. The doctrine of eternal judgment
 - i. The doctrine of perfection
- D. Even in the Bible in these short two verses gives us what is called systematic Doctrine/Theology. It's line upon line.

VI. The Doctrine of Men

- A. **Mark 7:7-8** *"Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God, you hold the traditions of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."*
- B. Jesus tells us that it is possible to replace God's doctrines with man's commandments. Paul warns us not to be carried away by every wind of doctrine; by the cunning of men (**Eph. 4:14**). And that we are not to give ourselves to the doctrines of men or their vain ideas (**Colossians 2:8**).
- C. The Bible also shows us that there are certain doctrines of which the Christian is to beware of and those which Christ hates.
 - a. We are to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees which is hypocrisy.
 - a. **Luke 12:1, Acts 23:8**

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b. The Lord condemned certain doctrines held by the Churches in **Revelation 2-3**.

1. The doctrine of Balaam
 - a. **Revelation 2:14, Jude 11, 2nd Peter 2:15**
2. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans
 - a. **Revelation 2:6,15**
3. The doctrine of Jezebel
 - a. **Revelation 2:20-24**
4. These are all doctrines of immorality.

D. The Bible tells us about false prophets, false apostles and false men who are teaching the Church from their own passions and not from the word of God. They twist the truth of the Bible to say what they want it to say. Many right now are in the Church; more will come to the Church; and even more will be outside the Church working to pull us away.

a. What are some current demonic doctrines?

1. The approval of homosexual ministers; that the Bible isn't the inspired word of God but man's inspired words about God; that Jesus is the spirit brother of Satan; and that Jesus was only a good teacher, prophet or simply a good person.
2. Large Churches (15,000+) saying there is no hell; the message of distorted grace; and the approval of sexual immorality.

VII. The Doctrine of Devils

- A. The scriptures warn us that at the end of this age, there would appear in the Church doctrines of demons (**1st Timothy 4:1-3 and 1st Corinthians 10:20-21**). These men and women are those who handle the Word of God deceitfully. The serpent at first twisted the Word of God to Adam and Eve, causing them to sin, and it is what he will do in the last days. False cults preach another “Jesus”, receive another “Spirit”, and proclaim another “Gospel” (**2nd Cor. 11:4**).
- B. All doctrine either proceeds from either the Spirit of Truth or the spirit of error. Men can teach according to the Spirit they receive and are motivated and influenced by. The last days are upon the Church, and Satan is releasing his mind, which is expressed through doctrines of demons in order to deceive mankind. This is an hour that you must know **WHO** you believe, what you believe and why you believe.
- C. This shows the progression and end of the two streams of doctrine.

a. GOD	SATAN
b. Spirit of truth	spirit of error
c. Light	darkness
d. Doctrine of God	doctrine of satan
e. Doctrine of Christ	doctrine of devils
f. Doctrine of the Apostles	doctrine of men

Patrick Walton

www.PatrickWalton.org

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|---------------------|-------------------|
| g. Believing | deceiving |
| h. Life and liberty | death and bondage |

VIII. The Symbols of Doctrine

A. Doctrine is likened to three main symbols which speak of its power and influence.

a. Doctrine is like leaven (Matthew 16:5-12)

1. This is because leaven (yeast) works silently and secretly in the lump of dough influencing the whole until all is leavened. This is speaking about evil doctrine and its ability to break into the teaching or the meal of God's word and also to the eater of the meal (listeners).

b. Doctrine is like wind (Ephesians 4:14)

1. Believers are likened in the Psalms to trees that are firmly planted by the rivers of living waters that are able to withstand the stormy winds that blow. Evil doctrine, as explained by Paul, works in the same way to uproot weak believers from the soil of God's word. Therefore, we must be strong and stay planted and allow our roots to go down deep.

B. Doctrine is like rain (Deuteronomy 32:3 Isaiah 55:10-11 Hebrews 6:1-9)

1. Here, rain is being used in a good way. Rain usually refers to revival, refreshing and restoration that comes down from the heavens and waters the earth in which we live. This is what we want, we want the rain or the Word that proceeds from God to come down from above and water the earth causing life to spring up.

IX. The Nature of Doctrine

A. Teaching the doctrine of God is how we grow in the knowledge of God and move from immaturity to maturity in Jesus Christ.

B. Here are several points concerning the nature of doctrine.

a. A doctrine must be sound

1. **1st Timothy 1:10; 2nd Timothy 4:2-4; Titus 1:9; 2:1**
2. Because in the last days many will depart from the faith, leaving sound doctrine behind. It is important that we work to keep sound doctrine for it alone preserves us from error, and makes for the spiritual health and development of the believer.

b. Doctrine must be pure

1. Job said that his doctrine was pure (**Job 11:4**).
2. Heathen religions, as well as various cults under the name of Christianity, hold, teach and practice impure doctrines. The test of purity of the teaching is the purity of the life it produces.

c. Doctrine must be scriptural

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1. **2nd Timothy 3:14-17**
 2. All scripture of God, including both the Old and New testaments. They are profitable for:
 - a. Doctrine
 - b. Reproof
 - c. Instruction
 - d. Correction
 3. Everything must be tested by the infallible Word of the Lord. The Scripture must be interpreted by proper principles in order to arrive at a safe place.
- d. Doctrine must be obeyed
1. To really understand truth, it must be obeyed. All doctrine is a lifeless theory until it is practiced. Doctrinal truth, no matter how good it is, or how powerful it is, has no effect on a person's life until it is practiced.
 2. The doctrine of the Pharisees in **Matthew 16:12** is about saying and not doing. We must shun the temptation to call others into the life and power of God and do nothing with it ourselves. We call this a religion of words with no deeds.
 3. In **2nd Timothy 3:10** Paul tells Timothy that he has known his doctrine, and his manner of life. Paul's doctrine translated into a way of living and a way of life. We don't want education without experience. We're not looking to only get smarter, but to go deeper at the heart level.
- e. Doctrine Determines Character
1. It is proven that what a person believes greatly effects what he is. Believing affects being and being effects doing. If we follow sound doctrine it will bring out the development of the divine nature and the character of Christ within us.
 2. If we follow false doctrine it will bring about a corruption of character.
- f. Doctrine affects fellowship
1. **1st John 1:1-7** tells us that two can't walk together unless they believe in the same doctrine.
 2. In **Acts 2:42** we see that they first gathered together around the doctrine and then to fellowship. This is no accident.
 3. **2nd John 9-10** tells us not to have fellowship with those that hate the doctrine of God. We are not to eat or wish those well who hate what we love, lest we share with them in their deception. Maybe the power of deception is so great, that the Bible is saying don't take time to listen to them. They have turned aside and moved on. Leave them for God, He will take care of it.
 4. John is not telling us to break fellowship over simple differences of doctrine, but over the main and plain's such as God, the Trinity, Christ, The Bible ect.... We are to find common ground with those that might not believe the same way as us, but rather to break fellowship with those who are bent on evil and deny the Lord Christ Himself.

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g. Doctrine determines destiny

1. Who and what we believe in effects our eternal destiny. It is foolish to say that it's okay whatever one believes just as long as they are sincere. You can be sincere and sincerely wrong.
2. Who and what is Christ to you is what determines where you spend eternity. In Christ is light and life and outside of Christ is darkness and death.

h. Doctrine and Love

1. Though we have all perfect doctrine, and perfect knowledge, if we have not love, we are nothing (**1st Cor. 13**). Paul didn't say that all these things mentioned in **1st Cor 13** are nothing, but rather that he was nothing without love. And so also are we. We are nothing without the love of Christ.

X. The Progression of Doctrine

- A. When Isaiah was speaking to the people of God he talked about a principle which God used to progressively reveal doctrine in the Bible. **Isaiah 28:9-13** he sets forth the question, the answer and the method of divine instruction.
 1. The Question "Whom shall He teach knowledge" And "Whom shall He make to understand doctrine?"
 2. The Answer "Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast."
 3. The Method "For the Word of the Lord was unto them...precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little."
- B. God did not give the full revelation of Himself at once. From Adam to Moses, a time of approximately 2,500 years, there was no written word or recorded revelation of God in Scripture form. God inspired Moses to write Genesis through Deuteronomy.
- C. The thirty nine books of the Old Testament took approximately 1100 years to record. No single prophet, seer, priest, king or saint ever received the full revelation of God. Rather, it was given precept upon precept and line upon line, building with each successive generation.
- D. In the times of the Old Testament the doctrine of God came by signs, shadows, types, ensamples, figures, allegory, dreams, visions, prophets, priests, kings, seers and saints. But in the New Testament it has come primarily through Jesus Christ the Son of God and the **apostles (John 1:1-3, 14-18; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 3:1-6)**. The New Testament was written within the first century, which is in great contrast to the time it took to write the Old Testament.
- E. The Bible is a bunch of parts that make up the whole and can't be separated one from the other. You can't take a portion of the Bible and separate it from the whole. You either take all or none, but no one takes only some. The Bible is a continuous story unfolding the revelation of God from page to page, moving through the part into the whole and back into the part.

XI. Here is a Systematic Theology Narrative Of The Entire Bible

- A. We believe God inspired the authors of Scripture by his Spirit to speak to all generations of believers, including us today. God calls us to immerse ourselves in this authoritative narrative communally and individually to faithfully interpret and live out that story today as we are led by the Spirit of God.
- B. In the beginning God created all things good. He was and always will be in a communal relationship with himself-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created us to be relational as well and marked us with an identity as his image bearers with a mission to serve, care for, and cultivate the earth. God created humans in his image to live in fellowship with Him; with one another; with our inner self; and with creation. The enemy tempted the first humans, and darkness and evil entered the story through human sin and are now a part of the world. This devastating event resulted in our relationship with God, with others, with our inner self, and with creation, being fractured and in desperate need of redeeming.
- C. We believe God did not abandon his creation to destruction and decay: rather he promised to restore this broken world. As part of this purpose, God chose Abraham and his descendants, to represent him in the world. God promised to bless them as a nation, so that through them all nations would be blessed. In time they became enslaved in Egypt and cried out to God because of their oppression. God heard their cry and liberated them from their oppressor, and brought them to Sinai where he gave them an identity and a mission as his treasured possession, and made them a kingdom of priests, and a holy people. Throughout the story of Israel, God refused to give up on his people despite their frequent acts of unfaithfulness to him.
- D. God brought his people into the Promised Land. Their state of blessing from God was intimately bound to their calling to embody the living God to other nations. They made movement toward this mission call, yet they disobeyed and allowed foreign gods into the land, overlooked the poor, and mistreated the foreigner. The prophetic voices that emerge from the Scriptures held the calling of Israel to the mirror of how they treated the oppressed and ostracized. Through the prophets, God's heart for the poor was made known, and we believe that God cares deeply for the ostracized and oppressed among us today.
- E. In Israel's disobedience, they became indifferent, and in turn, irrelevant to the purposes to which God had called them. For a time, they were sent into exile; yet a hopeful remnant was always looking ahead with longing and hope to a renewed reign of God, where peace and justice would prevail.
- F. We believe these longings found their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah; conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; mysteriously God became flesh. Jesus came to preach good news to the poor; to bind up the brokenhearted and set captives free. Proclaiming the arrival of the kingdom of God, Jesus brought about a new exodus, and restored our fractured world. He and his message were rejected by many as he confronted the oppressive nature of the religious elite and the empire of Rome. Yet his path of suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection has brought hope to all creation. Jesus is our only hope for bringing peace and reconciliation between God and humans. Through Jesus, we have been forgiven and brought into right relationship with God. God is now reconciling us to each other, ourselves, and creation. The Spirit of God affirms as

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children of God all those who trust Jesus. The Spirit empowers us with gifts, convicts, guides, comforts, counsels, and leads us into truth through a communal life of worship and a missional expression of our faith. The church is rooted and grounded in Christ, practicing spiritual disciplines and celebrating baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The church is a global and local expression of living out the way of Jesus through love, peace, sacrifice and healing as we embody the resurrected Christ; who lives in and through us, to a broken and hurting world.

- G. We believe the day is coming when Jesus will return to judge the world, bringing an end to injustice and restoring all things to God’s original intent. God will reclaim this world and rule forever. The earth’s groaning will cease and God will dwell with us here in a restored creation. On that day we will beat swords into tools for cultivating the earth, the wolf will lie down with the lamb, there will be no more death, and God will wipe away all our tears. Our relationships with God, others, ourselves, and creation will be whole. All will flourish as God intends. This is what we long for. This is what we hope for. And we are giving our lives to living out that future reality now.

Amen!