

Doctrine of Life

The Importance of Doctrine in the Life of the Believer

1. Bible doctrine is designed by God to be refreshing to the soul.

- *Deuteronomy 32:2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:*

Though the word "*doctrine*" is used often in Scripture in the most positive way, both the term and what it represents has fallen into great disfavor by many within Christendom.

A large religious men's organization openly proclaims not to be interested in doctrine but love and Christian unity. While such a concept sounds sweet and reasonable, it is a direct assault upon the doctrinal gift of God. And so the great truths for which blood has been shed to protect, are dismissed with a wave of the hand and a shrug of the shoulder.

The Church is being told that it no longer matters if Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, if the resurrection is true or false, or if salvation is by grace through faith alone. We are told that doctrine divides and is difficult to understand, therefore it is to be minimized. And so individuals become angry when confronted with a serious thought. But I open my Bible and I hear my God saying, "*My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.*"

2. Those who have no interest in the truth sometimes criticize those who know Bible doctrine. One day three friends of Job came to comfort him during the days of his affliction. But they were miserable comforters for they did not understand doctrine and grew impatient with Job for knowing the Word of God. Finally Zophar the Naamathite blurted out the frustration of their heart.

- *Job 11:4 For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. 5 But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee;*

Zophar had been taught that only the wicked suffer. Since Job was suffering he must have done something very evil. But Job had knowledge of the truth and the truth is this: the righteous do suffer unjustly. Not knowing Bible doctrine himself, Zophar had no patience with true truth.

3. It is possible to know, and give good doctrine without being arrogant. The author of Proverbs made no apology for what he had to say.

- *Proverbs 4:2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.*

As an artist knows he has done a good job on canvas, as a cook knows the meal is tasteful, as a doctor knows his counsel is wise and helpful, so the people of God can give forth good doctrine followed by words of exhortation, *"Listen to me. Forsake ye not my law, my doctrine, my teaching."*

4. Sometimes religious people become gospel hardened. They turn away from the truth. They refuse to listen to sound doctrine for any number of reasons, none of which are valid.

In the 7th century before Christ there lived a prophet by the name of Isaiah (*Jehovah has saved*). He was called to preach to a people who would not listen to him. The nation of Israel had grown willful, prideful, and spiritually stubborn. Every person had become a moral law unto himself. In frustration Isaiah lamented that the message God had given him was not being received and he began to wonder.

- *Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall he [the Lord] teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.*

Isaiah concluded that the hope was in the children. If the children can be religiously educated early on they might be taught spiritual knowledge and be made to understand sound doctrine. Centuries ago the Catholic Church learned this concept which is why officials of Rome can say *"Give us a child until they are 7 and then we do not care who gets the child. They will remain Catholic."* The Protestant community would do well to remember the children and move to teach *"those who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts"* the knowledge of the Lord.

5. In matchless grace those who have been taught erroneous doctrine might yet discover the truth.

- *Isaiah 29:24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.*

By the mercy and grace of God some who are identified with this assembly have come to see the apostasy of Rome, the error of Arminianism, and the subtle assault upon the historic faith of the Church by

Dispensationalism,
 the Health and Wealth Gospel,
 Self-esteem Theology,
 Liberation Theology,
 Eastern Mysticism,
 and the New Age Movement.

Some of us are very concerned about the business mentality transforming the body life of the Church so that it is not an organism but an organization that does not need the presence of the Holy Spirit. If God is gracious He will give to His people understanding, and they that murmured [against the truth] shall still learn doctrine.

6. If God is not gracious and the heart remains stubborn, if the prophets of God and the Word of God are viewed with a secret fundamental contempt, then it will be said once more as it was said in the days of Jeremiah,

- *Jeremiah 10:8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.*

Are you familiar with the doctrine of vanities? The doctrine of vanities refers to empty teaching. Empty teaching is finally recognized when a crisis of life comes and the soul cannot handle the pressures of the moment.

The only thing that a person can do is cry and hurt. The doctrine of vanities emphasize feelings, not faith, and emotions, not reason, though the gospel invitation is *"Come now and let us reason together saith the Lord."*

It is not an understatement to say that the average American Christian is trying to live on doctrines of vanities. Why? In biblical terms there is a *"brutish and foolish"* resistance to studying the Word of God. And so doctrine is dismissed with a wave of the hand, a shrug of the shoulders and a simplistic thought *"what the world needs now is love, sweet love, that's the only thing we're thinking of."*

But what is love? Only Bible doctrine can define what true love is. And the Word of God goes into great detail about this subject in 1 Corinthians 13 and other passages. But the larger point is this, trying to live on doctrines of vanities will not help when a crisis of life come. And so people fall apart under pressure and have no idea what to do next. A. W. Tozer was right when he said *"A doctrine has practical value only as far as it is prominent in our thoughts and makes a difference in our lives."* The doctrines of vanities cannot make a difference in our lives. My appeal to God's people is very simple. *"Come back to the Scriptures. Come back to a historic faith. Learn afresh the doctrines of grace."*

7. To dismiss doctrine is to dismiss Christ. To be uninterested in doctrine is to be uninterested in what Jesus taught.

- *Matthew 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:*

Because we love Christ we will love what He loves. Because we want to be a disciple of Christ then we will listen and be astonished at His doctrine. We will embrace it and cherish all that the Lord has to say. Sir Winston Churchill once quipped, *"I am always ready to learn, but I do not always like being taught."* Jesus said, *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29).*

8. No matter how difficult the doctrine might seem, the child of God can perceive what is being said and what is meant. In the gospel we are told that Jesus spoke to the people in parables. Someone has said that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. But a parable was something else. Christ used parables, or simple stories, in order to reveal truth and also to conceal truth. Does it surprise you that Christ intended to conceal certain truths from people? You will find this plainly stated in Scripture.

- *Matt 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. 16 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

Not everyone wants doctrine.

Not everyone shall have it.

Not everyone wants true truth.

Not every one shall receive it.

But for those who want to learn,

for those who want to know the mind of God and the heart of God,

for those who want to be fundamentally and forever different,

for those who want to be righteous as well as religious there can be

spiritual understanding no matter how difficult the teaching might appear to be.

One day Jesus spoke in a parable about the leaven of bread. But He had special meaning for His disciples.

- *Matthew 16:12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*

Through the use of parables Jesus communicated His doctrine.

- *Mark 4:2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,*

9. When taught properly, and received well, Bible doctrine will thrill the soul and astonish the heart. Time after time it is recorded in the gospels the people were astonished at the doctrine Christ taught.

- *Matthew 22:33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.*

10. There were distinct characteristics in the doctrine of Christ.

- Christ taught with authority and without qualification.
 - *Mark 1:22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.*
- Christ taught with power to command.
 - *Mark 1:27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.*
- Christ taught without fear of what men might do to Him.
 - *Mark 11:18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.*
- Christ taught with a view to changing lives.
 - *Luke 4:32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.*

11. Christians are commanded to beware of false doctrine.

- *Mark 12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,*

In order to be able to beware of false doctrine there are two factors which must be present.

- ❖ The truth must be known.
- ❖ A spirit of discernment must be cultivated. Christians must listen carefully to what is being said in spiritual matters, and what is not being said, for Satan is always initially subtle in ensnaring the soul.

In 1994, a document was published entitled *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*. A number of well known Evangelicals and Catholics signed this document which was drafted by fifteen participants from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds.

The purpose of this document was an attempt to show Christian love and unity, which is not wrong to do. The only problem was the asking price. In order to come together to sign this document ultimate truth had to be sacrificed and that in a subtle manner. The document spoke of salvation by grace through faith.

Catholics believe that and so do Protestants. But here is the difference. The word alone was not used in the document and that is a monumental problem for those who believe that Christ and Christ alone saves the soul from the penalty and pollution of sin.

The Catholic Church teaches that Christ plus the good works of men will produce salvation.

It cannot be both ways and the lesson is learned, Christians must be very discerning especially when great emotional themes are involved.

12. All doctrine embraced by the Church must find its authority in heaven.

- *John 7:16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

Some doctrines are of the devil. This fact is taught in 1 Tim 4:1-3 *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.* The world is now focused in horror as the results of institutionalized celibacy are revealed in the form of child molestation. Religious celibacy is associated with the doctrines of demons. From the pits of hell has come a practice that violates the creative order and undermines the known will of God.

Some doctrines are of human origin. The idea of a third coming of Christ at an event called the Rapture is a doctrine of human origin that became popular around 1830. The doctrine of transubstantiation whereby the wine and bread of communion become the literal body and blood of Christ is a doctrine of human origin.

True doctrine is from heaven and can be found by staying close to the Scriptures. The Puritan Richard Baxter wrote, *"We need to keep close to the ancient simplicity of the original Christian faith, and build our foundation on its original unity. We must abhor the arrogance of those who harass and tear apart the church of God under the pretense of correcting errors and holding to "the Truth." The sufficiency of Scripture, of course, must be upheld; but do not let others add anything to it"* (Richard Baxter, "The Reformed Pastor").

13. In matchless grace the Lord has promised that anyone who desires to know the will of God will be able to know Bible doctrine.

- *John 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

It is neither arrogant nor presumptuous to believe that the promise of Christ can be enjoyed. One of the greatest ways for Satan to get advantage over God's people is by telling them that truth is relevant and it does not matter what is believed as long as the heart is sincere.

Another deception is to refocus attention so that the presenter of doctrine becomes the focus of attention rather than the truth of the gospel. The issue is not whether or not a person is personable, the real issue is "*What is the truth?*"

14. It is interesting that after the arrest of Christ the high priest wanted to know two things about Jesus. Caiaphas asked of the Lord's disciples and then he asked about the Lord's doctrine.

- *John 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.*

15. It is often said that doctrine divides. I would argue that doctrine unites. Certainly it united the early Church and made them strong against the great forces that rose against them in the first three centuries.

- *Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

16. The people of God should have a doctrinal distinctiveness. The doctrine of the early Christians was so clear that the Jewish leaders could call what they taught "*your doctrine.*"

- *Acts 5:28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

May the Lord build this work on the distinctive doctrines of grace with the greatest doctrine being the love of Christ. Karl Barth was invited to deliver one of the distinguished lectureships at a theological seminary in the East, and while he was there a group of ministers and theologians and dignitaries of one kind or another sat down with him in a kind of question-and-answer period. Someone asked the question, "*What is the most profound thought that you know, Dr. Barth?*" This is what he said: "*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*"

17. By means of doctrine the truth of the gospel is set forth and souls are converted.

- *Acts 13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.*

18. When the believer knows Bible doctrine those whom the Father is drawing to Himself will be asked to explain it.

- *Acts 17:19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?*

19. The Apostle Paul commended the Church of Rome for receiving sound doctrine and obeying the same from the heart. There is no substitute in the plan of God for doctrine in the soul.
- *Romans 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*
20. The Church has a responsibility to mark those individuals who create unrest in the Church and live and teach in a manner contrary to sound doctrine.
- *Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*
21. Doctrine is to be communicated in a simple and plain manner.
- *1 Corinthians 14:6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?*
22. Those who know Bible doctrine are instructed and encouraged to share their knowledge when the assembly meets for worship.
- *1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*
23. The purpose of doctrine is to bring stability to the soul.
- *Ephesians 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*
24. It is incumbent upon pastors to make sure that all who are identified with the assembly are teaching no other doctrine than that which is apostolic and biblical in nature.
- *1 Timothy 1:3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,*
25. A life that is unsanctified is a life that is lived contrary to sound doctrine. Sound doctrine will always produce righteousness of life.
- *1 Timothy 1:10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers [slave traders], for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;*

26. One sign of a faithful minister who is sound in doctrine is that he teaches the Word of God.
- *1 Timothy 4:6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.*
27. The faithful minister is to give special attention to doctrine.
- *1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*
28. When a minister knows doctrine and commits himself to gospel obedience he saves not only himself but those who hear him. Where the Shepherd goes the sheep will follow.
- *1 Timothy 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*
29. Double honor is to be given to those who labor to know and communicate doctrine.
- *1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*
30. The personal testimony of every Christian before the world reflects doctrine.
- *1 Timothy 6:1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.*
31. The proud person is the one who rejects Bible doctrine.
- *1 Timothy 6:3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*
32. Paul was pleased that Timothy knew the doctrine he taught.
- *2 Timothy 3:10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,*
33. The very reason why the Scriptures exist is to teach doctrine, which is declared to be profitable to the soul.
- *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

34. Faithful ministers will never surrender doctrine. Doctrine and patience are the foundation for pastoral ministry.
- *2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*
35. It is part of New Testament prophecy that the time will come when doctrine will not be wanted nor practiced.
- *2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*
36. Sound doctrine is the only way to silence those who speak against the truth.
- *Titus 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*
37. Ministers are commanded to speak about those matters that produce a foundation of faith.
- *Titus 2:1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:*
38. It is possible to embrace Bible doctrine that is not corrupt.
- *Titus 2:7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,*
39. Faithful ministers must not hesitate to speak the whole counsel of God.
- *Titus 2:10 Not purloining [keeping back], but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*
40. Those truths associated with the person and work of Christ are doctrinal in nature.
- *Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,*
41. Basic bible doctrine includes teaching on baptism, authority, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment to come.
- *Hebrews 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

42. Those who do not know doctrine, and do not abide in the same, cannot be a Christian.

- *2 John 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*

43. There are certain fundamentals of the faith, which are so important that opponents of these beliefs are not to be embraced.

- *2 John 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:*

44. False doctrine, which is tolerated and received, will bring forth the wrath of God.

Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

45. The Lord commended the church of Ephesus for hating false doctrine.

- *Revelation 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

46. Great grace and favor will be shown to those who reject false doctrine.

- *Revelation 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.*