

Doctrine Matters

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”

(Acts 2:42).

A mother remarked to her small son, “This Sunday we get to start new Sunday school lessons on doctrine.”

The boy replied, “Doctrine! Yuk! It sounds like something for adults; not for kids.”

When the pastor announces a series or message on doctrine a number of things go through the minds of some of the members. Boring. Snoring. Doctrine—bad-tasting medicine. (Ever notice that the worst tasting medicine is usually the medicine that is best for you?) Some people hope they can use it as an excuse to visit in-laws or to stay home from church and wash clothes or clean house. But the study of doctrine is important. It does not have to be mind-numbing. The verdict of whether the teaching is boring or interesting depends on the lips of the speaker and the heart of the hearer.

Preachers and teachers can present doctrine and theology in simple, practical ways. Do not put your people to sleep.

Do not attempt to teach or preach above the heads (or above the understanding) of your people. Some think that proves superior intelligence. It doesn't.

James Denney said, “The man who shoots above the target does not thereby prove that he has superior ammunition. He simply proves that he is not an accurate shot.”

Paul said, “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Corinthians 3:12).

Some like doctrine—new doctrine. They are like the people of Athens who said, “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?” (Acts 17:19).

“For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21).

The preacher in Ecclesiastes said, “There is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3).

Every new doctrine that man manufactures tends to be the rebirth of some ancient heresy.

Paul advised Timothy, “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” (1 Timothy 4:16).

What is doctrine?

“Doctrine” is defined as “teaching.” What a church teaches is considered to be their doctrine.

The apostle's doctrine was the teaching of the apostles.

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

They continued teaching and preaching doctrine until it spread throughout Jerusalem.

“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” (Acts 5:28).

Doctrine

Later the rulers of one city lamented, crying this testimony, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6).

Every activity of the church can basically be divided into one of two categories.

Evangelism	Gospel or Good News.	Getting people saved.
Edification	Doctrine.	Keeping people saved.

Where does doctrine come from?

Doctrine is derived from the Word of God. The word “doctrine” is mentioned fifty-six times throughout its pages.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Someone has explained this verse as follows:

Doctrine	What is right?
Reproof	What is not right?
Correction	How to get right?
Instruction	How to stay right?

Why study doctrine?

There is safety in knowing what you believe. What you believe is of eternal significance. When you know what you believe, you will not fall into the pit of false doctrine. Your convictions and beliefs will protect and direct you. The knowledge of what is right will quickly uncover what is wrong.

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1).

Doctrines become roots in our lives. They provide us with a strong anchor. No one wants to be a tree without roots, or a house built on the sand.

People, churches, and organizations can drift from the truth. One man made a remark to a friend that a Christian college was now teaching all the branches of learning.

His young friend responded, “Yes, it now has all of the branches and none of the roots.”

It is possible to teach and preach things that are only branches of the tree—non-essential but what people like to hear. It is imperative to preach on subjects that are roots and anchors of Christianity.

“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister” (Colossians 1:23).

Doctrine helps find God’s way and illuminates His plan and will for man.

A study of doctrine should answer:

- What is truth?
- What do I believe?
- Why do I believe this?
- What difference does it make?
- How do I explain this to others?

Paul had these instructions for the young preachers he trained:

- “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” (1 Timothy 1:3).

Doctrine

- “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13).
- “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” (2 Timothy 4:3).
- “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” (Titus 1:9).
- “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

Why is doctrine important?

Richard Davis in *Bible Doctrine: Foundation of the Church* comments on the importance of doctrine: “It’s as important as water to fish, giving them a channel in which they may navigate and live and find sustenance. It is as important as an engine to an automobile, enabling it to be operative and useful. It is as important as a map to a person who is lost, enabling him to find his way.”

Phillips Brooks in *Yale Lectures on Preaching* says this concerning doctrinal preaching.

“No preaching ever had any strong power that was not the preaching of doctrine. The preachers that have moved and held men have always preached doctrine...Preach doctrine, preach all the doctrine you know, and learn forever more and more; but preach it always, not that men may believe it, but that men may be saved by believing it.”

Andrew Blackwood (as quoted in *Biblical Preaching for Today’s World* by Lloyd M. Perry) said, “In the past every evangelistic movement

blessed of God has come largely through preaching doctrine.”

Do you want to make an impact on the world?
Do you want to be prepared for heaven?
Doctrine matters!

Kevin J. Conner in *The Foundations of Christian Doctrine* was helpful in the formation of this lesson. He says believers need to know:

- “WHO they believe.
- WHAT they believe, and
- WHY they believe it.”

He further explains that all religions are founded on doctrines and that the “teachings received, believed, obeyed, and continually practiced determine:

1. Character—what we are.
2. Behavior—what we do.
3. Destiny—where we go.

Strong character is determined by strong beliefs, and clearly defined doctrine makes for clear cut convictions.”

According to Conner all doctrine proceeds from three sources: God, man, and Satan. A close look at Matthew 16:13-23 will illustrate this point.

- **God:** (Matthew 16:16-17). See also Proverbs 4:2; Hebrews 6:1; Titus 2:10; Matthew 7:28.
- **Man:** (Matthew 16:13-14). See also Matthew 15:9; Hebrews 13:9; Colossians 2:8.
- **Satan:** (Matthew 16:21-23). See also 1 Timothy 4:1-3

Study Questions

1. Why do you think some people find listening to lessons on doctrine to be boring?

2. Write out one Scripture that would encourage someone to teach and/or preach in a simplistic way.

3. How does James Denney's quote relate to our study on preaching and teaching doctrine?

4. Why do you think some like "new" doctrine?

5. What happens when you give heed to the doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16)?

6. What is doctrine?

7. Every activity in the church can be divided into what two categories?

8. What four things is Scripture profitable for according to 2 Timothy 3:16?

9. Why should we study Bible doctrine?

10. What should a study of doctrine answer?

11. What instructions did Paul give young preachers concerning doctrine?

12. What did Phillips Brooks say concerning doctrinal preaching?

13. What did Kevin J. Connors say believers need to know?

14. What does doctrine believed and obeyed determine?

15. Doctrine comes from what three sources?
