

Subject: *Why Doctrine Matters*

Scripture: *1 Timothy 4:13-16*

Truth matters. Biblical truth matters most. When we speak of “Biblical doctrine” we mean the truth of the Bible or the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. One of the worst symptoms of a weak and unhealthy church is the neglect of Biblical doctrine. In general the church is more interested in methodology than theology. We’re now less concerned about Biblical truth and more concerned about what it takes to bring in more people and money.

Take a careful look at this text. These are Paul’s instructions to Timothy who was a young pastor of a local church. This was in effect his job description. As a pastor I have the unusual assignment of explaining my own job description. It says that a pastor should give attention to both to his life and his teaching (doctrine, vs. 13). There are two areas that require him to be faithful: his character and his convictions. These are vital because eternal salvation is at stake: the pastor’s own salvation and the salvation of people under his leadership. We can’t afford to be confused or ignorant. There’s too much at stake. The only way to overcome lies and deception is truth. Yes, doctrine matters.

1. THE NEGLECT OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

Some would argue that doctrine doesn’t really matter or that it’s not important. Some would even say that doctrine is even harmful or dangerous. Here are some objections to doctrine:

A. Doctrine divides people, but love unites

It’s true that doctrine divides. It divides light from darkness and right from wrong. Adrian Rogers used to say: “It’s better to be divided by truth than to be united by error.”

B. Doctrine is dull and impractical

How can the teaching of God’s Word be dull and not practical? It is thrilling to know what God has revealed about Himself, His ways and His works. There is nothing more practical and useful than knowing the truth of God’s Word. We cannot live right unless we know what’s right.

C. Doctrine gets in the way of evangelism and missions

You can’t do evangelism and missions without the teaching of God’s Word. The very definition of evangelism includes doctrine.

Matthew 28:19-20 ¹⁹ *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

D. Doctrine is over the heads of most people

That’s just not true. The Bible was written for every person, not just for the scholar, the professor, or the pastor. Doctrine is found everywhere in the Bible, so that must mean that doctrine is for every person.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

Paul wrote First and Second Timothy and Titus. In these epistles Paul often refers to “sound doctrine” which means doctrine that is healthy and promotes good spiritual health. Sound doctrine always refers to Christian doctrine that is found in the Bible, while all other doctrine is either from man or Satan. Bible doctrine is sound (“healthy”), and all other doctrine is unsound (“deadly”).

A. Doctrine is the main purpose of Scripture

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.

B. Teaching doctrine is a priority for the pastor

Last week I preached a sermon from 3 John 4 on “The Pastor’s Greatest Joy.” That is the joy of knowing that the people under his care are walking in truth. Since that is the pastor’s greatest joy, the pastor’s greatest responsibility is to teach the truth.

2 Timothy 1:13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

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.

Titus 2:1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.

The pastor must preach the Bible as it is to people as they are. He must understand that he is a messenger, not an editor. He is a sower of truth, not the source of it. He is a steward, not the owner. He is the guide, not the author. He is the server of spiritual food, not the chef.

C. Learning doctrine is a priority for the church

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

Think what would happen if the church neglected to teach sound doctrine. How would false teachers be rejected? How would believers what is true and worth holding on to? How would sin be confronted and corrected?

Some are saying the modern church needs to get beyond doctrine, but instead the church needs to get back to doctrine.

3. THE BENEFITS OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

A. Biblical doctrine brings spiritual freedom

John 8:31-32 ³¹ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; ³² And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

We need to be free from sin, free from tradition, free from guilt, free from fear and superstition.

B. Biblical doctrine produces spiritual stability

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.

Colossians 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

C. Biblical doctrine prepares personal testimony

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

D. Biblical doctrine provides spiritual discernment

1 Timothy 4:1-5 ¹ 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. ⁴ For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: ⁵ For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

In this passage Paul was dealing with a popular false teaching in Bible times called Gnosticism. It taught that matter was evil and therefore things that were physically pleasing to our human appetites like marriage and eating certain foods were displeasing to God. How does Paul deal with it? He simply says, "That's not true." How did Paul know it was false teaching? He knew the truth.

E. Biblical doctrine furnishes spiritual nourishment

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.