

Membership Matters

Lesson 2 — Discovering Our Faith Student Guide



The Big Idea

A great church will be a bible-teaching church.

? Have you ever read something in the Bible you didn't understand, what it meant or why it was said?

? Have you ever heard someone quote Scripture and you weren't sure they were right?

Why Doctrine Matters

Right thinking leads to right living. Sound character does not grow out of unsound teaching.

Wrong doctrine is like a missile aimed one degree off target, small at first, but it compounds until it misses completely.

1 Timothy 6:3 — Hold to sound words — the doctrine that accords with godliness.

Right Beliefs → Right Behavior

Right Doctrine → Right Duty

Healthy Teaching → Healthy Christian

Healthy Christian → Healthy Church

MY NOTES

Building Your Belief System

Five foundations people build their beliefs on only one holds:

1. **REASON** — "I do it because I think it's right."
2. **EMOTION** — "I do it because I feel it's right."
3. **TRADITION** — "I do it because it's always been done this way."
4. **PEER PRESSURE** — "I do it because others are doing it."
5. **SCRIPTURE** — "I do it because God says so."

Living under the authority of God's Word and the Lordship of Jesus Christ is the only foundation that stands.

? Which of these five have you gravitated toward in the past 6–12 months?

Three Levels of Doctrine

1st Order — Essentials.

Deny these and you're not a Christian: existence of God, deity of Christ, Christ's atoning sacrifice, salvation by grace through faith.

2nd Order — Convictions.

Usually can't share the same church: inerrancy of Scripture, church government, purpose of communion and baptism, healing and miracles.

3rd Order — Preferences.

Can usually share the same church: worship styles, buildings, foods, holidays. Sadly, these are what we fight about most.

Three dangers:

1. Elevating everything you believe to the 1st order.
2. Letting 3rd-order preferences divide true Christians.
3. Treating everything as preference, "doctrine doesn't matter."

In essentials, unity · in non-essentials, liberty · in all things, charity.

Ephesians 4:4–6 — One body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

1 Corinthians 8:1 — Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

? *Why do you think preferences cause more conflict than the essentials?*

Guarding the Faith

Many who join cults were once church members who never understood what they believed they couldn't tell the true from the false. One cult leader admitted taking in "an entire church of ex-Christians" each month.

How are we protected? Know the truth so well, the counterfeit can't fool you. Spend a lot of time handling the truth.

2 Timothy 3:16 — All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable — our manual for living.

? *Can you relate to what the cult leader described about church people?*

What Shepherd's Way Believes

Eight convictions that shape our church:

Belief	Scripture	What it means
1. Bible as Sole Authority	<i>2 Timothy 3:16</i>	Our first question in any decision: "What does the Bible say?"
2. Autonomy of the Local Church	<i>Colossians 1:18</i>	Christ is our head; this church is self-governing.
3. Priesthood of Every Believer	<i>1 Peter 2:9</i>	Every believer is a minister with direct access to God.
4. Tithing	<i>Leviticus 27:30</i>	Giving 10% is the biblical standard, worship, and trust.
5. Baptism by Immersion	<i>Colossians 2:12</i>	An outward sign of an inward change; the way Jesus was baptized.
6. Security of the Believer	<i>1 John 5:13</i>	We can know we are saved and cannot lose our salvation.
7. Telling Others About Christ	<i>1 Peter 3:15</i>	Every Christian shares the Good News and invites others.
8. The Lord's Supper	<i>1 Cor. 11:23–26</i>	For believers; a reminder of His death. Observed monthly.

? Which of these eight is most new or surprising to you?

Take It Home This Week

- Identify one belief from today that you want to study further.

Memory verse: *2 Timothy 3:16* "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine..."