

*Doctrine: Why Bother?*

1 Timothy 6:3-5

What is doctrine? Why does it even matter that we understand its importance? Today we look into this great responsibility that is given to the church, kicking off a course of sermons as we go “Back to Basics” throughout the summer, digging into not only what we believe, but also who we are called to be! **Read 1 Timothy 6:3-5 as a group to refresh.**

**1.** The word “doctrine” or word “teaching” comes from the Greek word *didaskalia* - referring to what is taught, revealed, and believed. The first thing we see is that **we are given a command to know, guard, and teach the sound doctrine of God’s revealed truth as a local church.** Discuss the implications of those three verbs. What does that look like on a practical level, and how do the three interact together?

**2.** It’s also important to understand that **we are given a definite body of doctrine as a local church.** Read *Jude vs. 3* together; read *2 Timothy 4:6-7* together. What is significant about the language used by Jude here, similarly by Paul as well, about “the faith once for all delivered to the saints”?

**3.** This body of doctrine given to us is a **God-revealed body of truth!** This truth is spoken of clearly throughout Scripture. Discuss and expound upon *2 Peter 1:20-21*. This truth found here is a doctrine in itself, pointing us back to where this body of doctrine comes from! What are the direct dangers in walking away from this simple truth? How does this truth affect how we view all others?

**4. We are not only called to learn the doctrine but also to live, rest in and adorn the doctrine.** It is the doctrine that makes us what we are as a church. Read *Titus 2:1-15* together. How does Paul describe this “adorning of the doctrine of God our Savior”? What does it look like practically, even found here in *Titus 2:1-15*?

**5.** In a simple statement, based on what you learned today, answer the question - **Why is doctrine important?** Share your thoughts with the group.

## Doctrine: Why Bother?

1 Timothy 6:3-5

**1 Timothy 1:3 cf. 4:6, 13, 16 cf. 2 Timothy 1:13-14, 2:1-2, 14-15; 3:16; Titus 1:9; 2:1**

The word “doctrine” or the word “teaching” here comes from the Greek word *didaskalia*.

It refers to what is taught, revealed, and believed.

**In Scripture, doctrine or the teaching refers to God’s revealed truth given to His church.**

This word is used twenty one times in the New Testament.

As we just saw in the texts we first looked at in our worship this morning, *doctrine or teaching* refers to the substance, or the sum, or the summation of the teachings of the knowledge of God in all its manifold categories revealed in Scripture to the local church.

Right from the beginning of the church’s launch after Jesus ascended to heaven, in the book of Acts chapter 2, we find the fellowship of the believers gathering weekly in one place as a church “devoting themselves to the apostles’ doctrine” which also involved fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, and a time of prayer.

The insistence and the urging throughout the NT, especially to the pastoral servants of the local church, is to teach

doctrine from the Word of God to God's people steadily, soundly and practically.

The tension today, as we saw last week in 2 Timothy 4, is the prophecy that a time will come when God's people will begin abandoning this instruction both as a gathered assembly and as a worshipping assembly around good doctrine.

They will seek other forms of religious input and will seek spiritual junk food and entertainment or other messages instead.

**A great responsibility has been given to the local church down through the ages, through the Scripture to guard the doctrine and keep on teaching it to the saints who do have the holy desire for a biblical faith and not an entertained one or a worldly one or a defected one.**

So, in this first sermon in this course of sermons falling under the title, Back to Basics, I ask the question and provide the first response to ***Doctrine: Why Bother?***

First, as we have already seen in the texts, **1. We are given a command to know, guard, and teach the sound doctrine of God's revealed truth as a local church.**

And this first point has already been made clearly just by reading the first grouping of Scriptures we have looked at.

Second then, it leads to this factor for us to understand, that **if we are to know, guard and teach the doctrine, then lets understand that...:**

## **2. We are given a definite body of doctrine as a local church.**

There is a striking exhortation written in the letter of Jude in the NT concerning the body, or sum of doctrine we have.

### **Read Jude 3**

**Jude expresses that his original intention to the church that he is writing to was that he wanted to share in the gratitude with them about their salvation in Christ but found out that he had to write to them about their need to agonize for “*the faith once for all delivered to the saints*” instead.**

**This happened because of false teachers who had bad doctrine and were slithering through the churches.**

**Now, what is strikingly important here is that in the language used by Jude in verse 3 about—“the faith once for all delivered to the saints”— is that this expression means *the body of God’s revealed truth in Scripture is a definite body of teaching.***

### **Read Jude 3**



**It isn't a system of progressive and ongoing speculation where we can hopefully someday get it right. It is a body of doctrine that isn't an up for grabs; it isn't a "take what you like and leave the rest" body of doctrine. It also isn't a make it up as we go or let's renew or revise it as we go for each generation.**

***The faith*, that is *the doctrine*, is a definite body, a definite summation, a definite structure of truth that God has revealed and has given to His local church.**

**The Apostle Paul uses the same language in 2 Timothy 4.**

**Read 2 Timothy 4:6-7**

So when the shepherd comes into the pulpit to speak the Word of God, as commanded, during the times when the church has agreed to collectively and obediently gather before God for worship and discipleship—he is not there to express a worldly message, or a message of opinions and speculations—He is to be a Voice, an echo, a deliverer of **the once-and-for-all truth and revelation** given by God Himself to His assembly of gathered saints.

**3. We are given a God-revealed body of truth.**

Scripture speaks plainly about the origin and the source of the written doctrine given to the church.

**Read 2 Peter 1:20-21 (expound language)**

**The doctrine we are given originates in the self-disclosure and self-revelation of God.**

**It comes from God.**

**I believe there are things we are limited in ever knowing, and in many ways are unwilling to know, *unless God reveals those things to us.***

**The doctrines about grace, God's mercy, the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of the nature of the church, the doctrine of humanity, the doctrine about Jesus, the doctrine of true worship, the doctrine of the future—and more—these doctrines bind us to the self-revelation of God.**

**God has revealed them to us.**

**And humanity proves everyday that we either don't know them naturally and when we hear them most don't want to hear them and accept them...*and this is a doctrine in itself revealed in the Word of God that points us back to where the body of doctrine comes from.***

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:14**

**4. We are not only called to learn the doctrine but also to live, rest in and adorn the doctrine.**

**Read Titus 2:1-15**

**Doctrine makes us what we are as a church.**

**Doctrine is the foundation on which the church can rest itself as it seeks to live out personally the Gospel, sharing it with the lost world.**

**And, in this doctrinal rest, as a church, we build the worthy superstructure upon it that brings glory to God.**

**If the foundation is unstable, untrue, incorrect, deficient, then, as Jesus says about not following his doctrine in Matthew 7, we will collapse when the winds and the rains come.**

**I see this happening all too often today among God's people just as Jesus said.**

**They don't realize that apart from Christ—apart from His plan, His purpose, His design, His doctrine as revealed in Scripture— given to the church—apart from Christ—ultimately, we can do nothing.**

**Now that doesn't mean we won't be busy, or successful in the world or even somewhat Christian-like even as a church—but it actually means that what we actually do will ultimately mean nothing from an eternal perspective because it wasn't according to God's clear plan in the doctrine He gave us.**

**Are you living according to the doctrine?**

**Just as a pitcher will mold and shape the water that we pour into it, God's revealed truth—the doctrine once delivered—holds, shapes and molds the local church.**

**If this doctrine is inadequate, or heretical in design, or alien to the revealed Word, or fossilized in its expression—than the local church that bears it will be the same.**

**There is much, too much, that hangs upon sound doctrine.**

**(Illustration)**

**In the third and fourth century, a doctrinal controversy arose that swept through the churches in the Roman Empire.**

**A heretic named Arius declared that Jesus was *like* God but that He was only a man and not God revealed in the flesh as Scripture states.**

**Many of the churches, already weakened by bad teachings, fell into Arius' heresy.**

***But along came Athanasius*—a man sound in doctrine and in the faith and he strongly declared the clear doctrine on the matter of Christ's deity from the scrolls and the history of the early church.**

It is recorded that people at the time said to Athanasius, *“Athanasius, the whole world is against you.”*

To which his famous reply came, “Then it is I, Athanasius, against the world.”

What many don’t realize is that this great dispute really centered around a single Greek letter—*the iota*.

(Iota on Separate slide)

**I**

Separate slide for these two—perhaps highlight the middle iota with a color.)

**ὁμοιούσιος**

**Jesus is like God, or similar to**

**ὁμοούσιος**

**Jesus is the same as God, identical with God, actual essence of God**

This doctrinal dispute was settled among the churches not too long afterward by the steady and proper reading of the clear Scripture and it was reaffirmed as the unchanging doctrine it had always been—Jesus is Word

**of God, who was God and who became flesh and dwelt among us.**

**Scottish essayist and author Thomas Carlyle in the 1800's as a young man chided the whole thing as showing that the church and clergy were so silly and divided over inconsequential things, arguing over what he felt were pointless differences.**

**I hear this sort of language sometimes among some of our younger generation. I had been that way too in my late twenties and early thirties—it is basically just left overs that need to get pressed out from our immature adolescence.**

**Thomas Carlyle when he became an older and wiser man, he apologized for that remark he made when he was younger and was more immature with his ideas.**

**It is said that he admitted in his later years that those kinds of distinctions in doctrine can spell the difference between heaven and hell, life and death, truth and error.**

**And this is true.**

**I say all this because I believe firmly today that we have a body of doctrine that we as a people can rest ourselves in—it is knowable, believable, supportable, and it is deliverable to others if we are faithful.**

**I don't agree with the postmodern view that we cannot know truth, or that it is more enlightened to leave things as open to believe what you want, or that we don't have to take a stand on things, that *we can live in the grey as if that were the more enlightened or spiritual position*—I know the grey very well as a teacher and as a seeker all my life, but ...sometimes the grey isn't actually grey at all—it is a coward's void, or a donkey's cave.**

**If you don't stand for anything surely you will fall for everything.**

**I affirm the doctrines in their large and minute expressions in revelation. We can stand upon on the concrete things revealed in the Word.**

**There isn't an astronomer, a mathematician, a chemist, or an accountant who doesn't articulate a science, calculate a distance, create a chemical or balance an account by saying that the little decimal point is not important!**

**You move that point into the wrong direction and everything comes crashing down!**

**You cannot transfer digits and numbers and simple measurements without foolishly making an enormous problem with what you are trying to do!**

**So Church, Doctrine, why bother?**

**I tell you this: we are given a definite body of doctrine as a church, it is found in the Scripture, if we go building our lives and our church on inadequate doctrinal equations, upon insufficient teachings and practices and even anti-biblical teachings—if we go and try and change what God has already clearly revealed—and build on it—we have moved the decimal point that determines eternal destinies.**



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1



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