

## Bible Doctrines Class – Introduction

### 2 Timothy 3.16-4.5

What is doctrine? A doctrine is what the entire Bible teaches about a particular topic.

Bible Doctrine has fallen on hard times. Partly as a reaction to fighting over “minor” doctrines, some of have decided that no doctrine is worth arguing about. But mostly because our church culture has been so heavily influenced by the world culture that, we have become very pluralistic about these sort of matters. Do the details of belief really matter? Frankly, doctrine sounds onerous, boring, and irrelevant. People don’t want doctrine, they want something that is practical. Doctrine does not motivate, it bores, it divides, it is controversial. I am aware of all of these accusations and misgivings. I am also aware that what is popular and trendy in churches is to identify a specific demographic (which is usually young) and format your ministry to that specific audience which means that your “talks” since sermon sounds so authoritative usually do not deal with too much theology since people like relevant topics not dry, stale, centuries-old theology.

Poor theology. It used to be considered as the queen of the sciences and now it is the ugly step-child of the church. This series is unabashedly a series on the important doctrines of the Bible. The format that I am teaching these doctrines is that of what is often called “systematic theology.” Let me give you a little background.

**Historical theology** is the study of how a particular doctrine has been understood throughout the history of God’s people.

**Philosophical theology** is the attempt to discuss theological topics by relying upon tools and methods of philosophical reasoning and what can be known about God from observing the universe. C.S. Lewis – Mere Christianity has some of this in it and Thomas Aquinas’ proofs for the existence of God (argument from order) is a long this line as well.

**Apologetics** is the study of providing a defense of the truthfulness of the Christian faith usually in an effort to convince unbelievers of the legitimacy of the faith. (discuss)

Elements of historical and philosophical theology along with apologetics will be found in this study, but those areas will not be the focus of our study.

Systematic theology is distinguished from **Biblical theology**. Biblical theology traces a subject from the beginning of the Bible to the end and sees how that topic developed in the OT and then into the NT. For example, if you were doing a study on the Holy Spirit, by means of Biblical theology, you would see what Moses wrote about the Spirit, then the historical books, then the poetic books, then the major and minor prophets. Then you would look at the gospels, Acts, epistles, until Revelation. There is some wonderful benefit of studying biblical theology. For example, it helps to guard against importing a

NT definition back into Moses. When you are studying the bible, you want to have an accurate understanding of that truth as it was originally given and what was originally intended.

Biblical theology is great and necessary to help you see the entire story-line of the Bible. But, the focus of our study is more on systematic theology. There is going to be overlap with Biblical theology, but systematic theology attempts to answer the question of: What does the entire Bible teach about a particular topic. All of the relevant passages are assembled together and organized. Then, you summarize all that is being said. Sometimes those summary statements result in terms being used that the Bible does not use, but that we have used to attempt to describe the teaching (e.g. incarnation, Trinity, deity of Christ)

Systematic Theology is the study of what does the entire Bible say about this important topic? But, we do not learn this for the sake of winning an argument, or for becoming smug in the fact that we have all the answers. Doctrine is never separated from life.

Understanding doctrine is critical for the following reasons:

- 1) It helps to protect the purity of the church from false belief.
- 2) It helps to protect the priorities of the church from unimportant issues or dangerous distractions.
- 3) It helps to protect the people of the church from false prophets and wolves.
- 4) It helps to prepare God's people to minister and serve.
- 5) It helps to promote the "2<sup>nd</sup> half of the great commission."

2 Tim. 3.16-17/Ephesians 4.11-16

### Theological Pyramid

Understanding and applying Bible Doctrines will confront false ideas that we have had and it also helps us to be able to point out to people involved in false religions false beliefs that they are holding to (assuming they have a general level of respect for the Bible).

This study is also exciting and gratifying because you can see that everything that the Bible says is somehow related to everything else the Bible says about that particular topic.

Systematic theology will help us grow as Christians. It is not an intellectual exercise, though it does involve the intellect. The study of God is inherently a spiritual exercise (of the Spirit) which means that it encompasses all of our being.

Therefore, we should approach this study with prayer. Psalm 119.18 (what if my eyes aren't open?) 2 Cor. 2.14.

e.g. book on the Reformation – author understood the gospel and the doctrine of election and hated them

We should study theology with humility. We have much to learn from the Bible. We cannot exhaust this book. People can become “bored” with preaching/preachers and church when the preacher stops learning and the people are then given the impression that they have learned it all and don’t really need to hear it again when it is the same thing over and over. If the preacher stops learning, his sermons will be stale and the people will stop growing. Conversely, if the people do not cultivate an appetite for good sound theology, then they will by default bring upon themselves preaching that is story telling, and about an inch deep.

I study theology and am overwhelmed at how much I have left to attempt to learn.

We should study theology with reason. (see this morning)

We should study theology with help from others. 1 Cor. 12/ Romans 12 – gift of teachers assumes we don’t know it all. Peter learned from Paul; Paul from Ananias, etc.

We should study theology so that our worship is more complete. Theology drives worship. Emotion drives emotion.