



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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“For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)

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Why is Doctrine Important?

By Pastor Stephen Rees, Grace Baptist Church in Stockport.

Adapted from Banner of Truth website

Why should Christians be familiar with the great doctrines of the Bible? Let me give you four reasons.

1) The first is the simplest of all: *Because we love God.* And if you love someone, you want to know everything about them. If a young man meets a girl and falls in love, he’ll want to find out all sorts of things about her - what sort of family she’s from, which school she went to, what her hobbies are, whether she’s had other boyfriends, whether she prefers Indian or Chinese food ... And if we love God, we’ll want to know all about him - about his nature, his character, his purposes, his commandments; about the work he’s doing in the world, about his work in saving people, about his plans for the future. In other words we’ll want to study ‘doctrine’. If I ask you what ‘justification’ means, what I’m really asking is, ‘how does God justify sinners?’ If I ask you what the Lord’s Supper is for, what I’m really asking is ‘what does God do for us through the Lord’s Supper?’ All our doctrines are about God.

2) A second reason why Christians should study doctrine: *Because what you believe will shape your spiritual life.* It’s obvious isn’t it? The way you think about God will affect the way you relate to God. If you don’t believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, you can’t believe that God is eternally love. It’s the doctrine of the Trinity that gives us confidence to believe that love is in the very nature of God. Again, if you believe that God is only in control when good things happen, you can’t trust him in the times when everything goes wrong. It’s the doctrine of God’s total sovereignty that enables us to say in the darkest hour, ‘I don’t know why this has happened but I know you planned it, and that you planned it for my good’. Or again, if you’ve never realised that God’s ultimate purpose is to glorify himself, every part of your relationship with him will be distorted. Instead of having him at the centre, you’ll go through life thinking that human happiness is the most important thing of all - and expecting him to think so too.

I said above that studying doctrine is really just finding out the truth about God. And we need to do that so that we can relate to the God who’s really there, not the God we imagine him to be.

3) And then thirdly, we need to study doctrine, because without it we won’t understand the world in which we live. Or to put it differently, we won’t know how to live in the world.

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A friend whose husband is suffering with a crippling and painful illness asks you whether you think euthanasia is wrong, and if so, why. Or somebody asks you why the Bible is against homosexuality. You're not going to be able to answer those questions in any consistent way unless you understand the doctrine of Man as the image of God. It's the fact that every human being is God's image-bearer which gives every human life - however damaged - infinite value. It's the fact that Man and Woman in their union are supposed to mirror the diversity in the Trinity, which makes homosexuality such an unnatural thing.

You're trying to sort out your children's behaviour problems. How far are they to blame for the tendencies that they've inherited from you? When do you restrain a child? When do you punish him? When do you encourage him? The only way you'll get clear answers to those questions is by taking seriously a whole string of Bible doctrines: the doctrine of God's justice; the doctrine of the Fall and the effect of Adam's sin on all his descendants; the doctrine of total depravity; the doctrine of common grace ... No wonder that parents in our society are at sea when it comes to bringing up children! They don't know what human nature is, they don't know what justice is, they don't know what authority they themselves have. But the doctrines of the Bible give you compass and chart through the storms.

A thorough knowledge of Bible doctrine will give you the tools to sort out all the practical problems of living in this complex fallen world - even in matters where the Bible doesn't speak directly.

4) And fourthly, we need to study Bible doctrine *because without it we won't know what to say to the unsaved people we meet*. Peter tells us that we must be 'prepared to give to every man a reason for the hope that is within us' (1 Peter 3:15). We have to be competent to answer questions. So what do you say when someone asks how God can allow a tsunami to sweep away scores of thousands of people? How can you answer that question if you've never grappled with the doctrine of God's sovereignty? How do you answer when your child says to you 'I've tried to become a Christian but it didn't work?' You'll need a very clear grasp then of just what saving faith is, and how it relates to the human will, and where assurance fits in. Your atheist friend sneers at the food laws of Leviticus and asks why God changed his mind; why he lets you eat prawns and pork. Are you going to be able to sum up clearly the function of the Old Testament law and how it's fulfilled in Christ?

Well, if I gave you a test on Bible doctrines, how would you do? OK? You think you could answer all the questions without much difficulty? I'm very glad. But remember, that would only scratch the surface. Don't imagine that you would have mastered the doctrines of the Bible. It would take a thousand lifetimes to explore all that God has revealed about himself in Scripture. It will take all eternity to explore God himself in the world where we'll need no Bible. Keep growing, keep learning, keep thinking. Another quote from Peter:

Therefore dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen. (2 Peter 3:17-18).

'Hold on to what you already know, and grow in knowledge!' - that's his advice.

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And what about those of you who would struggle? Well I can't blame you. Put it down to the preacher you've had to listen to each Sunday night. But don't give up. Go back and listen to some of the sermons again. You may find that they make more sense second time through, when you're at home and the children have gone to bed. You couldn't take in all the passages I quoted? Well listening on your own you'll be able to stop the recording to look them up, and make sure you've grasped what they're saying. If questions come to your mind as you're listening and you can't find the answers, write them down and ask me. If I don't know the answers, we'll both have some work to do.

There are lots of good books to help us. We've got the 1689 confession - what a wonderful guide to Christian doctrine! We've got the big books of systematic theology, written by giants like Dabney, Hodge, Berkhof or Dagg, and smaller handbooks like Bruce Milne's Know the Truth or Berkhof's Summary. We've got masterful works on individual doctrines like Bavinck's Doctrine of God or John Murray's Redemption Accomplished and Applied. And we've got the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth. We don't expect him to reveal new truth to us now. But we do expect him to illuminate the truth that he's already revealed in Scripture.

Who is a Christian?

Ephesians 1:3-14

- 1) CHOSEN by the Father (1:3)
- 2) ADOPTED as children by Jesus Christ to Himself (1:5-6)
- 3) REDEEMED by Jesus Christ (1:7)
 - Blood of the lamb (Exodus 12:12-13)
 - Forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15)
 - We have been gifted by the riches of His Grace (1:8)
 - We have been shown the mystery of His will (1:8b-10)
 - Obtained an inheritance (1:11)
- 4) SEALED by the Spirit (1:13-14)

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	Today: 18/10/2009	Next Week: 25/10/2009	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Joan Tay to our worship services last Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	John Poh	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld George Chew	
<i>Message:</i>	Who is a Christian?	Who is God?	
<i>Text:</i>	Ephesians 1:3-14	Isaiah 43:1-3; 55:6-9	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Resident Minister: Thank God for His provision of Pastor Ki as our resident minister. Continue to pray for Pastor and Mrs Ki as they prepare to return to London in December. • DHW Bible Study: Today, we will cover Lesson 22 (Gen 29). Please spend the upcoming week preparing for Lesson 23 (Gen 30). • Pray for those who are sick: - Yetta's mum (recovery from cancer/stroke), Constance (ankle), Douglas (knee pain), Barbara (Alzheimer's), Prema (thyroid and skin condition), Eld Jack Ford (old age and knees), Margaret (Asthma, Hay fever), Brian (wisdom tooth extraction in Oct), Mrs Ki's father (lung cancer), John (ankle, wisdom tooth extraction - appointment), Eld Chew (shoulder operation on Tuesday) • Pray for those who are on travel: Nicolas (Belgium), Rev & Mrs Ki (Australia), Daniel & Maureen (S'pore), Yetta (South Africa) • Pray for those seeking employment: Joy, Brian • Pray for the Church repair works needed: Roof, electrics, taps and notice boards. • Pray for the new and returning students as they settle in and begin their new semester.
<i>Organist:</i>	Anthony	Grace	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	John Poh	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld George Chew	
<i>Message:</i>	Compensation	Three in One	
<i>Text:</i>	Isaiah 53:4-6	1 Peter :1-1-2	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Joy	Anthony	
Other Duties			
	Today: 18/10/2009	Next Week: 25/10/2009	
<i>Ushers:</i>	Joey / Evelyn	John / Joy	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Melissa	Maureen	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>PA Crew:</i>	Joshua	Joshua	
<i>DHW Class:</i>	Lesson 22 (Gen 29)	Lesson 23 (Gen 30)	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 23 Oct	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: SGAT Meeting	
Sat 24 Oct	4:00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by John	
<u>Worship Service Collections</u>			
Offering: £434.30	Lunch: £34.42		
<h2 style="margin: 0;"><u>A Lamp for the Foot-Path</u></h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Adapted from "In Green Pastures" by J.R. Miller, D.D.</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">God's Word as a guiding light is a lamp unto our feet, not a sun flooding a hemisphere. It is not meant to shine upon miles of road, but in the darkest night it will always show us the one next step; then when we have taken that, carrying the lamp forward, it will show us another step, and thus on till it brings us out into the full, clear sunlight of coming day. It is a lamp, and it is designed to lighten only little steps, one by one. We need to learn well the lesson of patience if we would have God guide us. He does not lead us rapidly. Sometimes we must go very slowly if we wait for him. Only pace by pace does he take us, and unless we wait, we must go in darkness. But if we wait for him, it will always be light for one step.</p>			