

The Importance of Bible Doctrine

Preface: The first time I became aware of the church I attend now, I thought that Bible doctrine was another gimmick—the pastor placed a strong emphasis upon the Word of God. I had been in Baptist churches where they were very friendly and sincere; in Pentecostal-type churches where people are revved up emotionally; and in Catholic and Episcopalian churches, where the emphasis was upon ritual. So, when I became aware of Berachah Church, I thought, *this is their gimmick*—lots of teaching. However, as I began to receive more and more teaching, it became clear to me that, this is not just a gimmick. Some of you who read this study go to a church, and you hear a 20 or 30 minute sermon once or twice a week; and that is how most churches do it, so, when you read me go on and on and on about knowing the Word of God, you do not quite grasp its importance. Therefore, let's just see what the Word of God has to say about Itself.

1. Part of Jesus' growth was related to the knowledge of Bible doctrine. **And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was on Him** (Luke 2:40). **And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man** (Luke 2:52). Ask yourself, how does God increase in wisdom? God does not increase in wisdom; His knowledge is infinite and unchanging. However, Jesus, in His humanity, *increased* in wisdom. He did not depend upon His deity to grow spiritually. Jesus, in the Age of the Hypostatic Union, set the pattern for all believers in the Church Age.
2. When Satan tempted our Lord, there were several things going on; but primarily, these temptations were based upon (1) the misapplication of the Bible versus the proper application of the Word of God (2) and a temptation to get Jesus to depend upon His deity. If you don't believe me, go back and reread this in Luke 4:1–13.
3. Knowing the Word of God was as important in the Old Testament as it is in the New.
 - a. Moses told his people: **"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as bands between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."** (Deut. 6:6–9). Jews were to saturate the lives of their children with the Word of God.
 - b. The teaching of the Word of God took place in a number of areas—in the high places or at the gates, the entrance into the cities (Prov. 8:1–3, where Bible doctrine is called *wisdom*). Here are a few verses taken out of Prov. 8: **"I [wisdom] call out to all of you, and my appeal is to all people. You gullible people, **learn** how to be sensible. You fools, cause your heart to **understand**. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her."** (Prov. 8:4–5, 10–11).

- c. Believers were to seek the Word of God in the Old Testament, and to recognize that God's way of thinking was not their way of thinking. "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:6–9).
 - d. Believers in the Old Testament were not to depend upon their own understanding. Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths [i.e., He will guide you] (Prov. 3:5–6).
 - e. Bible doctrine is the source of happiness, a longer life, and a more peaceful and pleasant existence. Happinesses to the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace [and prosperity]. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed (Prov. 3:13–18).
4. Jesus Himself is the Living Word of God in John 1:1–14.
 5. The renovation of your thinking is the key to the Christian life. Paul urges the Romans: Do not be conformed to this time period, but be transformed by the renovation of your thinking, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and complete will of God (Rom. 12:2).
 6. The Word of God (Bible doctrine) is different from human thinking and human wisdom. Prov. 3:5–6 Isa. 55:6–9 1Thess. 2:13
 7. The key is not how you feel or how zealous you are for the Lord; the key is knowledge of Bible doctrine. Brothers, my deep desire and my prayer to God is for Israel, that they may be saved. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:1–4). The example given is, Jews who are industrious and emotionally committed to some form of religion, but they do not understand imputed righteousness, so they, therefore, attempt to establish their own righteousness. They come up short because of a lack of knowledge.
 8. It is not possible for the Word of God to fail. Luke 16:17 Rom. 9:6
 9. It is fundamentally important that the Word of God is not changed, adulterated or twisted. 2Cor. 2:17 4:2 1Tim. 4:1 Titus 1:9–11
 10. Paul urged the Colossians to let the word of Christ live inside of them abundantly. Col. 3:16
 11. Those who teach the word of God are doubly honored. 1Tim. 5:17

12. Paul told Timothy, who taught the Word of God: **Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who ought not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth** (1Tim. 2:15).
13. We purchase time through knowledge of the Word of God. **Take great care, then, how you live--not unwisely but wisely, making the most of every opportunity** [lit., *purchasing the time*, which means to get doctrine at your every opportunity]; **for these are evil days. Therefore do not be stupid, but keep on comprehending what the Lord's will is** (Eph. 5:15–17). God does not text you or send you emails as to what His will is; this is found in the Word of God.
14. So there is no misunderstanding, we are not required by God to go to the Word of God and dig out Bible doctrine for ourselves. This is why God provided pastor-teachers for us. We are not renegades roaming about in groups of one.
15. Timothy's ministry was all about teaching. 2Tim. 2:–14–16 4:2–4
16. One area where believers become confused is, they are told to be obedient to those teaching them (Heb. 13:17). This does not mean that your pastor follows you around and gives you a list of sins that you have committed and now you need to stop committing those sins. The verb found here is the present middle/passive imperative of peithô (πειθω) [pronounced *PIE-thoh*], which means, *to persuade; to induce one by words to believe*. Strong's #3982. The passive voice means, the believer is to allow himself to be convinced or persuaded of the truth of Bible doctrine as taught by his pastor. The imperative mood means, he is mandated to do so. The present tense is linear or durative action. That is, you continually to be persuaded, which means, you think about Bible doctrine continually.
17. Quite obviously, the epistles themselves are a well of Church Age doctrine, which information is dug out by a pastor-teacher and presented to his congregation.
18. The Old Testament is not to be ignored either. Jesus taught the Old Testament and the epistles are filled with illustrations from the Old Testament. Rom. 3 Heb. 4 10 11 Jude 7
19. There are 2 words in the New Testament related to this topic which are used, at times, in a very technical sense:
 - a. There is simple knowledge, called gnôsis (γνῶσις) [pronounced *GNOH-sis*] which means, [*general*] *knowledge, understanding*. Strong's #1108. If you recall the verse, **Knowledge puffs up**; this is gnôsis. We also find this word in Rom. 2:20, which speaks of having a **form of knowledge**.
 - b. Then there is *over-and-above knowledge*: epignôsis (ἐπίγνωσις) [pronounced *ehp-IHG-noh-sis*], which means, 1) *precise and correct knowledge* 1a) used in the NT of *the knowledge of things ethical and divine*. Strong's #1922. This is Bible doctrine which is believed.
 - c. Having an understanding of Biblical terms and information from the Bible is simply information unless you believe it. When you believe it, it becomes spiritually useful. It is transformed from gnôsis into epignôsis.
 - d. **For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, not being mixed by faith by those who listened** (Heb. 4:2). See also 1Thess. 2:13 2Thess. 2:13 Heb. 3:18–19 11:6
 - e. James calls this the implanted word in James 1:21. The adjective that he uses means *inborn, implanted by nature, implanted by others instruction*. He

amplifies this by distinguishing between a hearer of the Word and a doer of the Word (James 1:22–25). This is James' vocabulary, as opposed to Paul's. This does not mean that you read the verse, "Help little old ladies walk across the street" and so you immediately run outside, find some little old lady, and help her across the street. You implant the Word of God in your soul through faith. You believe the Word of God, and it becomes a part of your understanding of the world. Automatically, once you believe something, it will affect your life and what you do.

- f. This is how you grow spiritually. When Bible doctrine is simply academic knowledge, it is much easier to forget; and since it has not become a part of your soul, you are unable to put it into a whole system of thinking, where spiritual things are compared with other spiritual things. 1Cor. 2:13 James 1:23–25
 - g. When Bible doctrine is not believed, John speaks of the Word not being in us. 1John 1:10 (this is someone asserting that he does not sin, which is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God).
20. It is Bible doctrine which is accurate and believed which is active in the soul of the believer. **Here is another reason why we never stop thanking God: When you received God's Word from us, you realized it wasn't the word of man [human viewpoint]. Instead, you accepted it for what it really is—the Word of God. This word is at work in you believers** (1Thess. 2:13).
21. The difference between an immature believer and a mature believer is the word of righteousness. Those who are taking in the most basic of doctrines are spiritual infants; those who take in advanced doctrines are mature believers (obviously, these doctrines must be believed). **For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of God's revelation. You need milk, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil** (Heb. 5:12–14). See also 1Cor. 3:1 14:20 Eph. 4:14 1Peter 2:2. In other words, you are not a mature believer simply because you have been a Christian for a long time, and you don't sin as much as you used to. Morality is essential to the preservation of a national entity, but simply improving your morality is not the Christian way of life.
- a. The Apostle John has a slightly different vocabulary. He has a much more limited Greek vocabulary than Paul, so he speaks of keeping (guarding, protecting) the Word, which results in the perfecting (completing) of the love of God in us (which is synonymous with spiritual maturity). 1John 2:5
22. **The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart** (Heb. 4:12).
23. The Word of God is eternal. Matt. 5:18 1Peter 1:23
24. Peter makes one of the most amazing statements in the Bible. He saw the glorified Jesus Christ, something which we can barely imagine. He and James and John saw Jesus transformed on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matt. 17:1–9. However, even more important than this thing which he saw with his own eyes is the Bible

doctrine which he was writing and disseminating. When we apostles told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we did not base our message on clever myths that we made up. Rather, we were eye-witnesses to His majesty with our own eyes [Peter saw the glorified Jesus Christ with his own eyes]. For example, we were eyewitnesses when He received honor and glory from God the Father and when the voice of our majestic God spoke these words to him: "This is my Son, whom I love and in whom I delight." We heard that voice speak to him from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain [Peter heard the very voice of God with his own ears]. We also keep on having a stable word of prophecy [Peter and his associates know and teach Bible doctrine] that you would do well to keep on being attentive to, as a light that shines in a dark place as you wait for day to come and the morning star to rise in your hearts. First, you must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. No prophecy ever originated from man. Instead, it was given by the Holy Spirit as men spoke under God's direction (2Peter 1:16–21). Peter has the gall to compare what he is writing to (1) seeing the glorified Christ and hearing God speak and to (2) the accepted prophecies of the Old Testament.

25. It might help to simply see synonyms for doctrine and how often they occur in the New Testament:

- a. Didachê (διδάχη) [pronounced *dihd-ahkh-AY*], which means, 1) *teaching 1a) that which is taught 1b) doctrine, teaching, concerning something 2) the act of teaching, instruction 2a) in religious assemblies of the Christians, to speak in the way of teaching, in distinction from other modes of speaking in public.* Thayer definition only. Strong's #1322. 30 times.
- b. Its verbal cognate, *to teach*, is found 97 times in the New Testament.
- c. *Teacher*, which is based upon this verb, is found 59 times.
- d. Another related word is didaskalia (διδασκαλία) [pronounced *dee-dask-ah-LEE-ah* or *did-as-kal-EE-ah*], which means *teaching, instruction; 2) teaching; 2a) that which is taught, doctrine; 2b) teachings, precepts.* Zodhiates spends over two pages on this word, giving the meanings *the act or manner of teaching; the thing which is taught, the instruction, the precept, the doctrine.* Strong's #1319. 21 NT occurrences.
- e. The word for truth is alêtheia (ἀλήθεια, ας, ἡ) [pronounced *ahl-Ā-thi-ah*], which means *[absolute, unimpeachable, divine] truth, divine viewpoint, veracity, verity; reality; of a truth, in reality, in face, certainly; conduct which is in accordance with truth/divine viewpoint.* Thayer Definitions: 1) *objectively; 1a) what is true in any matter under consideration; 1a1) truly, in truth, according to truth; 1a2) of a truth, in reality, in fact, certainly; 1b) what is true in things appertaining to God and the duties of man, moral and religious truth; 1b1) in the greatest latitude; 1b2) the true notions of God which are open to human reason without his supernatural intervention; 1c) the truth as taught in the Christian religion, respecting God and the execution of his purposes through Christ, and respecting the duties of man, opposing alike to the superstitions of the Gentiles and the inventions of the Jews, and the corrupt opinions and precepts of false teachers even among Christians; 2) subjectively; 2a) truth as a personal excellence; 2a1) that*

candour of mind which is free from affection, pretence, simulation, falsehood, deceit. Strong's #225. It is found 104 times in the New Testament Bible.

- f. A noun previously mentioned, epignōsis (ἐπίγνωσις) [pronounced *ehp-IHG-noh-sis*], is found 21 times.
 - g. The verbal cognate of epignōsis (ἐπίγνωσις) [pronounced *ehp-IHG-noh-sis*] is found 43 times.
26. Finally, consider what God left us: the Bible, which is 1000+ pages, some of which is easy to understand; some which seems easy but is not, and some material which is quite difficult to grasp. Personally, I have been studying for 30+ years, and I still have a long ways to go. God did not give us a 20 page or 50 pages rule book, or set of morality laws. What He left for us is far more complex, and takes far more than a lifetime to fully understand.

What I have learned over the years is, the Bible is a very technical and specific book. The Christian life is not simply, you believe in Jesus Christ and then you do whatever. Or, you try to be more moral than you used to be. Morality is a wonderful thing, but it is not the Christian way of life.

Now, let's say, you're skeptical, or you don't care, or you don't have time, or you have some excuse. Once you believe in Jesus Christ, you are saved. You cannot lose that. If you choose to ignore the mandates of Christianity after being saved, then you are subject to God's discipline (Heb. 12:6). It is not my business to follow you around and tell you what you ought to be doing; and it is not the business of your pastor to follow you around and tell you what to do. Before your own master, you stand or fall (Rom. 14:4). You learn to be more concerned about what God does to you and less concerned what man does to you (Heb. 13:6).

Other places where you can read about the Importance of Bible Doctrine. Most of these studies are very different and approach this topic in a different way. I cannot vouch for all of the teachers below, but this particular teaching in each case appears to be accurate:

<http://www.lakeeriebiblechurch.org/Doctrine/pdf/ImportanceofBibleDoctrine.pdf>

<http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/importanceofBD.html>

<http://www.swordofthespiritbibleministries.com/RJSonnet/RJSonnetNOTES/Doc%20of%20the%20Importance%20of%20Bible%20Doctrine.pdf>

<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/idoctrin.htm>

http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/doctrine_importance.html

<http://www.gospelway.com/bible/bible-importance.php>

http://www.biblebc.com/forpreachers/SermonVault/Christian%20Growth/sound_doctrine.htm