

I. Intro to Foundations Series

- A. We are about to embark on a practical and glory filled series called the “**Foundations of our Faith**”. The goal going through this series as a Church Family is to root us and ground us in the foundational doctrine that the Church of Jesus is built upon. It is our hope that the Holy Spirit uses this series to establish unity in our Family, create deeper personal intimacy with Jesus, and to have a helpful tool to offer new believers who come to know Jesus in the future.

- B. Our goal in these first 2 sessions is to understand the foundations of the discipline of theology, and its primary purposes. Such knowledge will give us inspiration, encouragement, and perseverance as we move forward in this series. Furthermore, we will seek to establish the posture our hearts for the rest of our series.

II. Theology – The Study of God

“What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us...For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God...Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes to your mind when you think about God?’ we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man...A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to a building; where it is in inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.”
-AW Tozer “The Knowledge of the HOLY”

- A. Theology can be defined as study of the person of God through the revelation of Himself that He has given to His creation. True intimacy with God is the result of theology and theology is formed through doctrine or truth. Therefore, what we establish as truth/doctrine is the most vital thing to our entire life in God.

- B. As we approach this series in establishing doctrine, we must keep in mind that we do this not primarily to be apologetic or to have more confidence about our faith; but we establish doctrine in order that our hearts are rooted and growing in real love for God.

III. Misconceptions and Folly

- A. There are four basic misconceptions that are argued concerning the need for the everyday believer to study and know doctrine.
 - 1. Irrelevant – It is not necessary for the everyday Christian life of a believer. There is so much work to be done for the Kingdom of God who has time for tedious study of doctrine.

2. Complex - The doctrinal topics in question are perceived as esoteric, or lofty, and therefore very difficult to grasp for the common man. Thus, theological study should be reserved only for well-read and academic individuals who possess the necessary tools for extracting doctrinal truths.
 3. Inaccessible and Futile – Seemingly, there is a nearly endless array of views among the theologians giving the impression that theology is for all intents and purposes incomprehensible. If the learned and scholarly cannot agree upon truth, then how could someone lacking such training hope to figure out what the Bible says, if it is even possible to do so.
 4. Divisive – As an extension of the previous point, doctrinal concerns are therefore viewed as divisive and hurtful to the Body of Christ. Wouldn't it just be better to have everyone agree on the fundamentals and lay aside quest for clarity on the controversial subjects that cause quarrels in the Church?
- B. Due to these four common misconceptions, doctrinal clarity has been dismissed as irrelevant and what is viewed as “practical”, and becomes the bottom line. Nearly all messaging that the common believer in the West is exposed to, in the regular rhythms of Church life, is centered on practical exhortation related to personal fulfillment or domestic arenas of life (marriage, finances, relationships, etc.) Increasingly a methodology for Church growth and unity is being adopted that reduces truth to the lowest common denominator, stripping it of all nearly all doctrinal confessions and preserving a loose code of morality and faith. A growing idea is that it is virtuous for one to believe almost nothing at all in the hopes of pleasing as many people as possible.

IV. The Importance and Need for Doctrine/Truth

- A. God took on flesh to radically clarify the knowledge of God, not to rally people around ambiguity. There is not one single aspect of Christianity that does not come back to the knowledge of God.
 1. **Real Love** – It is common in the church today to hear “I just love Jesus.” as a deflection when confronted with doctrinal questions. It is true that doctrine apart from love is nothing, to think that we can have authentic love for Jesus without it is absolute folly. (Jer. 24:7, John 17:25-26, Eph. 3:17-19)
 2. **Worship** – Doctrine is the fuel for adoration. The extent to which a community of believers is committed to and enthusiastic about, prayer and worship is dynamically connected to their pursuit and grounding in the knowledge of God. (Ps. 30:1-5, 86:12, John 4:23)
 3. **Transformation** – The sanctification process functions through encountering the truth of who God is and what He is like. We will not become like Him unless we

know Him through the established doctrine of God found in the scriptures. (2 Cor. 4:6, Col. 3:8-10)

4. **Wisdom of God the Holy Spirit** – God did not include irrelevant information as He inspired the scriptures, and yet the frequent practice by the modern believer of picking and choosing scriptural knowledge based on personal interest implies this. There are not parts of the Bible written for scholars and other parts written for “normal” people. All of Scripture is intended to be read and understood by every believer. (1 Cor. 2:7-11, 2 Pet. 1:19-21)
5. **Continuity of Belief & Practice** - What one believes about God and His ways will dramatically shape their entire life. While many would dismiss doctrine as irrelevant, few would openly embrace such an attitude about truth. Yet doctrine is simply the truth as revealed in the Bible. Is it coincidence that in an hour when the saints know so little about their Savior, compromise and worldliness abound? (1 Cor. 14:20, 2 Cor. 3:18, Eph. 5:17)

Everyone’s practical theology vitally affects the course of his or her life. We have some measure of choice in what that theology will be in our own individual case, but we will certainly have a theology. And a thoughtless or uninformed theology grips and guides our life with just as great a force as does a thoughtful and informed one.

- Dallas Willard “The Spirit of Discipline”

6. **The Biblical Mandate** – We must remember that the premise of the Apostolic writings was Pastoral letters to all believers that referenced many scriptures. The writers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit expected their readers to understand the doctrine they were writing about. Doctrine is not merely apologetic in nature they are the source of our joy, love, and perseverance in discipleship. (Eph. 4:11-14, 2 Pet. 3:15-18)

V. **Lack of Conviction in a World of Opinions and Deception**

- A. We live in an age of great and increasing deception and we are a generation with many opinions lacking in conviction. We are quick to form conclusions, and rarely take the time in prayer, fasting, and study to acquire authentic biblical convictions. Rather than enduring the process of allowing the Word of God to stand over us we generally opt to circumvent the time and wrestling of study and rely upon tradition, a teaching we heard, an internet source, or a book we read.
 1. **Humility** - One of the greatest differences between those who have an opinion and those that carry convictions when it comes to truth is humility. There is often an arrogance that accompanies doctrinal conversations. In general, what matters

to the person with the opinion is that they can be commended as being smarter and right. We must remember that truth and light are given to us by grace through the Holy Spirit. If we know and understand truth it has nothing to do with being intellectually superior. (Pro. 18:12, Gal. 6:1, 1 Pet. 3:15)

2. **Overcoming Deception** – We are in a constant and sometimes fierce battle over our souls against the powers and principalities of the evil one. The main way we are attacked is by the sowing of deceptive lies about who God is and what He is like. These lies are then propagated by generally well-meaning people who think they are proclaiming truth. Our defense and offence in this battle is doctrine or truth. There is an all-out assault on the truth of who God is and what He is like in our day. Many times believers are found lacking in the confidence that comes with convictions and left questioning their opinions. As the Day of our Lord's return draws nearer, we are told that this reality will increase, resulting in a great apostasy; as a Church filled with opinions faces the rage of deception. (Mat. 24:3-10, Col. 2:16-23, 2 Thess. 2:8-10)

VI. The Biblical Exhortation of our Need for Doctrine

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. (I Timothy 1:3-7)

20 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. (I Timothy 6:20-21)

Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.....Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth... (II Timothy 2:14-16, 22-25)

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ (Phil 1:9-10)

The Foundations of Our Faith Series
Part 1 Theology Defined and Pursued

Nov. 27th 2016