



CONNECT

**FIRST STEPS - LESSON 17: DOCTRINE OF
CHRISTIAN FAITH**



Objectives

- New believers to understand basic doctrine of the Christian faith.
- To help new believers to put biblical teachings into practice and to stand firm in them.

Introduction

An extract from Martin Luther's sermon:

“Christendom must have people who can beat down their adversaries and opponents and tear off the devil’s equipment and armour, that he may be brought into disgrace. But for this to work, powerful warriors are needed, who are thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures and can contradict all false interpretations and take the sword from the false teachers- that is, those very verses which false teachers use and turn them round upon them so that they fall back defeated.

But not all Christians can be so capable in defending the Word and articles of their creed, they must have teachers and preachers who study the Scriptures and have daily fellowship with it, so that they can fight for all the others. Yet each Christian should be so armed that he himself is sure of his belief and of the doctrine and is equipped with the sayings from the Word of God that he can stand up against the devil and defend himself, when men seek to lead him astray.”

What Is Christian Doctrine?

Christian doctrine, to simply put is scriptural teaching based on theological truths. The word “theology” comes from two Greek words, theos (“God”) and logos (“Word”). The study of theology is an effort to make definitive statements about God and His implications in an accurate, coherent, relevant way which is based on God’s self-revelation in His Word. Therefore, theology should always be explicitly based on the teachings of Scripture. Doctrine equips believers to fulfil their primary purpose, which is to glorify God and delight in God through a deep personal knowledge of Him. A meaningful relationship with God is dependent on a correct knowledge of God.

Stand Firm on Christian Doctrine

We must stand firm on Christian doctrine because:

1. It is an act of obedience to the scriptures

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

2 Timothy 1:13-14

These Scriptures command us to obey and follow the pattern of sound teaching. Therefore, we must be careful to live according to God’s teachings; otherwise we may fall away from His truth.

2. It allows us to discern between right and wrong, truth and error

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

3. It helps us to watch out for deceivers

I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.

2 John 7-8

Mentor Chat

1. Why should I apply Christian doctrine to my life?

Our culture today promotes a variety of religions and argues that all are equally valid. It is important to apply Christian doctrine because we need to know what to do when we are faced with different situations in life. Sound (wholesome, healthy, correct) Christian doctrine keeps us from error. Without sound doctrine, our faith is in danger of being distorted or destroyed. Christian doctrine separates Christianity from cults and other religions of the world.

The doctrine that we hold on to and practise will determine our character – who we are; behaviour – what we do; destiny – where will we go. These truths will anchor you to what God says is true so that we will not be swayed with what the world perceive to be right or any thought about God that people throws as us. And when we persevere in them, it will save our lives.

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 4:16

Basic Christian Doctrine

1. God

The only one true God, creator of everything, who reveals Himself as the Trinity. God reveals Himself as one God existing in three Persons (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). God is distinguishable between the Three Persons, but yet indivisible in His essence. Co-eternal, co-equal and co-existent in attributes, power, nature and glory. White light shone through a prism will separate into its rainbow colours. The different coloured lights is distinguishable but yet it is essentially one white light. In a similar way, God is one in essence but can be distinguishable as three Persons.

God is:

a) All-powerful (Omnipotent)

Omnipotence means that God is able to do all His holy will. God's will is never frustrated by evil. This allows believers to have peace and confidence in the face of suffering and tough times as believers put their trust in God.

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:26

b) All-knowing (Omniscient)

Omniscience means the state of having total knowledge and the quality of knowing everything. All of God's thoughts and actions are perfectly informed by perfect knowledge which shows that He is absolutely trustworthy.

Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

Psalm 139:4

c) All-present (Omnipresent)

Omnipresence means that God is not limited by any form of spatial dimensions but is present everywhere with His whole being. All believers can seek God anywhere regardless of place.

Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" declares the Lord. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 23:24

d) All-sovereign

The fact that God is sovereign essentially means that He has the power, wisdom, and authority to do anything He chooses within His creation. God has absolute rule over creation as the King and total control and determination over everything that happens. Read Psalm 104.

He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.

Psalm 147:8-9

e) Holy

This means that God is absolutely and uniquely excellent above all creation and without sin. God should be feared and obeyed, that believers should earnestly pursue purity.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

1 Peter 1:15-16

f) Righteous

Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true.

Psalm 119:142

g) Spirit

God does not exist with a tangible physical body like us. This is why we should never attempt to represent God with anything physical.

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

John 4:24

h) Eternal, immortal and invisible

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17

2. The Bible

The Bible is inspired by God and given to men who recorded them in writing. The Bible gets its true, powerful, authoritative, holy character from God himself, who inspired human authors to write exactly what He wanted them to write. God uses each author's unique personality and circumstances instead of merely dictating words for them.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible is God's word expressed in human words, it can be trusted as the definitive revelation from the mouth of God Himself. The Bible is entirely truthful; because God is the ultimate author. This gives the Christian a greater confidence because the Bible is a sure foundation and therefore is the standard of faith as well as the ultimate handbook for every aspect in a believer's life.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21

3. Jesus

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was supernaturally conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Whilst on earth, He was both perfectly God and perfectly man at the same time. When He was tempted, He never sinned. He was crucified on the cross and physically rose from the dead on the third day to fulfil the will of the Father to provide salvation from sin to those who believe in Him. He ascended physically to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. One day in the future, He will come again to establish His kingdom.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John 1:1-3

4. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in the lives of Christian in this present age. The Holy Spirit is God who convicts people of sin and leads them to repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus for salvation. He dwells within believers to enable them to live holy lives and obey God's will.

All the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Bible remain in the Church today and should be fully exercised to build up the Body of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, an experience distinct from repentance and faith in Jesus for salvation, enables Christians to testify of Christ in the power of the Spirit. In the Christian life, every believer must live in obedience to Christ and be under the covering of the Holy Spirit. Christians should always be filled with the Spirit.

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

Luke 24:49

"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.

John 15:26

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.

John 16:13-15

5. Humankind and Sin

God created man in His likeness and without sin but they sinned willingly. As a consequence, sin entered the world and all mankind has inherited a sinful nature. Since everyone has fallen short of God's standard because of sin and is subject to God's wrath and condemnation, they all need His salvation which is made possible through the death of Jesus Christ; otherwise they will be judged and punished eternally in hell.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Genesis 1:26

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

6. Salvation

We can be saved from God's wrath when we confess and repent from sin and place our trust in Jesus Christ. Salvation is given by the grace of God only on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice for sin when He died on the cross and cannot be achieved by a person's own works. At the point of salvation, an individual becomes a new creation in Christ. Through obedience and faith a Christian is gradually transformed to become more like Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

7. The Church

The church is the community of God's people and central to God's plan of salvation. Once we become Christians, we are adopted into God's family and become part of the Universal Church, made up of Christians of every age. Local churches are made up of believers who regularly meet together in different localities to worship, listen to the Word of God, fellowship, witness, participate in communion, pray and have other activities together. We believe that every Christian should be committed to a local church.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

Ephesians 3:10

Genuine Christian fellowship is ultimately brought by God for the purposes of advancing and displaying God's Kingdom on earth. As Christians love one another and submit to together to the Lordship of Christ, it creates a display of heavenly realities that are to come. Various images and illustrations has been used in the Bible to describe the church.

Each member in the church serves a crucial and distinct role, to work together in unison to see God's Kingdom advancing and being displayed on earth.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:21-27

The church is compared to as a bride for whom Jesus will return for. As the bride of Christ, the church should strive for an undivided devotion to Christ, who is her husband.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:25

8. Angels and Satan

God created angelic beings for His service. They are supernatural but not divine.

See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.

Exodus 23:20

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Hebrews 1:14

The Bible teaches that Satan, together with the many angels that follow him, are evil, supernatural, angelic beings. There is a spiritual kingdom on earth under Satan's authority opposed to God and His plan. Satan's kingdom is at war with God's kingdom. The death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross defeated Satan and enables all men and women who put their trust in Jesus to join God's kingdom. The Church has been commissioned to rescue men and women from Satan's kingdom to God's, a task which will conclude when Jesus returns. God will ultimately triumph when Satan's rule is terminated and his kingdom destroyed.

9. The Eternal Judgement

The Bible teaches that at the end of this world will occur when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back for His church. The dead will be raised and everyone will have to give account before God. All those who have put their faith in God will receive their reward and live eternally with God in heaven. On the Day of Judgment the remainder will be judged and receive eternal punishment in hell.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10

Mentor Chat

1. After learning the basics of Christian doctrine, how do you apply these in your daily life?

a) The Bible

God’s word holds the highest standard and the ultimate truth for your life because it is infallible. You should use the Word of God to weigh what is right or wrong for your lives and be ready to apply these truths as you learn.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it— they will be blessed in what they do.

James 1:22-25

b) God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

Some people do not believe in the Trinity. You must use the truths in the Bible to stand firm in your belief. The Bible teaches us that there is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit working together in unison as one almighty God. Any teaching that denies the Trinitarian nature of God is a false teaching.

c) Humans are sinners

Mankind is precious in God's sight because you are created in God's image, and now know that Jesus has already paid the price for your sins. Therefore, we should love others as Jesus loves us, because they are precious in God. We should then be compelled to share the gospel to those who have yet to know God.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

At the same time, we are not to put our trust in our own ability and in others but to put our trust in God and His word.

d) Salvation

You are saved by God's grace, not by the good things that you do but by God's grace through faith. Have confidence in your salvation because you know that God has freely given you His grace.

e) The Church

Commit yourself to a local church because the local church is the centre of God's plan for the world. Make it your goal to come to worship together regularly with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, to serve and build God's church.

f) Eternal Judgement

We should fear God and not desire after the worldly gains and pleasures. We ought to be prepared to meet our Lord Jesus Christ by living a holy and godly life that pleases God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2

Conclusion

It is crucial that every Christian is equipped with the correct Christian doctrine as it plays an important role in our faith. Being able to know certain truths at the back of our mind helps us approach God with the correct frame of mind, and it

also helps us in being able to discern and distinguish between other false doctrines. It is important that every Christian are to be bearers of God's truth to the watching world.

Those who teach by their doctrine must teach by their life, or else they pull down with one hand what they build up with the other.
- Matthew Henry

Memory Verse

WATCH YOUR LIFE AND DOCTRINE CLOSELY. PERSEVERE IN THEM, BECAUSE IF YOU DO, YOU WILL SAVE BOTH YOURSELF AND YOUR HEARERS.

1 TIMOTHY 4:16



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