

DOCTRINES

(This hand-out is for those who prepare and teach doctrines)

I. What is Doctrine?

Doctrine means "Teaching"

- It is fundamental to our belief and practice.
- Systematic teaching of Christian belief.
- Enables one to put faith in Christ in personal life as an individual.
- It is the study of God's revelation to Mankind through the Scriptures.
- It is right thinking about God and our world - ourselves, others, etc.,

II. Why do we study Doctrine?

- To grow in Christian life
- To safeguard ourselves from wrong doctrines that affect our Christian life.
- To distinguish from right and wrong teaching.
- To live as a real Christian witness and to spread the Gospel to the world.

III. Importance of Doctrines:

Study of doctrine is spiritual, for it relates to the things of the 'Spirit'. There is no biblical opposition between 'faith' and 'understanding'. Indeed the possibility of growth in faith and obedience for the Christian student will inevitably depend upon one's intellectual grasp of the contents of Christian beliefs.

Christian doctrine has greater importance in Christian service. We need to remember that truth produces its proper results and error always takes its revenge. Even slight deviation from the facts of revelation may lead eventually to graver obliteration. The best way to avoid error is to define the norms of truth as clear as possible. We need to study the doctrines with humility and to apply the implications in our day to day life.

IV. On Teaching Doctrine:

A. Preparation: (See Appendix I)

1. Be dependent on the Holy Spirit, the master teacher.
2. Decide the topic according to the need of the participants.
3. Prayerful preparation is very much essential.
4. Even if you have prepared material in hand, shape it according to the need of the listeners.
5. Things to be considered while preparing:
 - Bible is the text book. Use different versions.
 - Careful use of concordance is helpful.
 - Interpret the Scripture with reference to the entire Scriptures.
 - Be thorough with the context.
 - Study each verse in its context, without isolating any single verse.
 - On the basis of your study, group the findings, make small and give sub-titles to them.
 - After studying the Scriptures, consult different authors on various and try to identify the biblical view.

- Discuss with other leaders if necessary.

B. Presentation:

- i. Rely on God for effective communication.
- ii. Be confident and present it with love.
- iii. Have enough teaching aids.
- iv. Simplify the complicated.
- v. Allow discussions in the given time.
- vi. Respect the participants' views; if it is contradictory settle politely.
- vii. Give no room for argument.
- viii. Have personal time with the participants who disagree with your views but don't emphasize your views.
- ix. Give enough Bible references to substantiate correct views.
- x. Do not meddle with the issues on which differences of opinion prevail even among the Bible-believing Christians.
- xi. Do not undermine any denomination and sects who differ from your views.
- xii. Be careful not to hurt anyone in the class.
- xiii. Relate the subject to our daily lives.
- xiv. Use simple language; avoid technical terms.

V. How to use the Bible in the study of Doctrines?

To have a wider and clearer understanding of biblical view of any doctrine, we can adopt the following procedure:

A. Since Christ is the centre of Christian faith and the New Testament has the records of His life and teachings, it is essential to study the New Testament thoroughly. Use the following order:

- Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) - where teachings of Christ are recorded.
- John's Gospel - different in its approach
- Acts of Apostles - Historical
- Pauline Epistles - teaching of the Apostles
- Other Epistles - "
- The book of Revelation - apocalyptic language used

At this juncture, we must remember that the Apostles (Paul, Peter, John, James & the author of Hebrews) have written their documents to clarify their doctrinal stand, based on the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because people were misled by various false teachings.

Now let us turn our attention to the study of the Old Testament. Studying the Old Testament after the New Testament does not in any way minimize the importance of it. The New Testament bases its teaching explicitly on the Old Testament. So the study of the Old Testament is essential for the right understanding of any doctrine.

Study the Old Testament in the following order, for easy grasp:

1. Historical books (Joshua to Esther)
2. Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy)

3. Prophetic books (Isaiah to Malachi) - study along with the history; Poetical language is used to a certain extent.
 4. Poetic and wisdom literature (Job to Song of Solomon) - be careful to interpret since these are written in poetical language; lot of imageries have been used.
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APPENDIX - I

METHOD OF STUDYING A DOCTRINE

OBSERVATION:

Step I: Choose references relevant to the topic

II: Find out cross references

III: Note every detail you notice
using FFQ...

(Fact Finding Questions: What, Where, Who, Why, When, How and So What?)
note specific problems

INTERPRETATION:

Step IV: Find the meaning of each verse in its context

(in the process narrow down the material) from the key thought of each verse to the key thought of the whole)

Step V: Write the key thought

CORRELATION:

Step VI: Categorize the verses based on the thoughts Structuring

a) discard the unrelated verses

b) underline the Word which bring the main thought

c) group the verses which have similar thought

d) simplify the structure & bring into logical order.

APPLICATION:

Step VII Note the lessons learnt

Step VIII Remove all presuppositions & prejudices

Step IX Group the overall Biblical thought.

Recommended Books for Study

01. New Bible Dictionary - IVP
02. One hundred Bible Lessons, - Alban Douglas
03. New Testament Theology, - D. Guthrie
04. In understanding Be Men, - T.C Hammond
05. Summary of Christian Doctrines, - L. Berkhof
06. Basic beliefs of Christianity, - L.W Thompson
07. Pocket Guide to Christian Beliefs, - I.H. Marshall
08. Creative Pocket Book Series, - Creative Publishing
09. What the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit - Peck.
10. Anointing, Stephen
11. When He comes, - A.W. Tozer
12. The fullness of the Holy Spirit, - Billy Graham
13. Things surely to be believed - S. English
14. Key words of the Christian Life - W. Wiersbe
15. The Christian Life, - S.B. Ferguson
16. A Survey of Bible Doctrine, - Charles A. Ryrie
17. I want to be a Christian, J.I Packer
18. Knowing God. J.I Packer
19. Baptism and Fullness, J.R.W Stott
20. The Holy Spirit, R.A Torrey
21. The Last things, - G.E. Ladd
22. The Holy Spirit and the Church, Lesslie New Begin
23. The Momentous Event, W.J Grier
24. The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Merrill F. Unger
25. Concise Theology, - J.I Packer
26. He Saves, - R.T. Kendel
27. How to obtain Fullness of Power, - R.A. Torrey
28. God has spoken, - J.I Packer
29. Basic Christianity, J.R.W Stott
30. Know why you believe, Paul E. Little
31. Faith and Focus, by APEGF.