

LESSON SIX

IN TOUCH WITH HEADQUARTERS: The Apostles' Doctrine and Prayer

*"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks...
Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies.
Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess 5:16-21).*

DAY 1: READ & SUMMARIZE

The following verses encapsulate the lesson to follow. Read them carefully, meditating on their message. Express the key concept of each passage as it applies to doctrine and prayer.

A) 2 Corinthians 3:18 –

B) 2 Timothy 2:2 –

C) 2 Timothy 3:16 –

DAY 2: LEARN & RESPOND

INTRODUCTION

The time we spend in communion with God is the most important time of our lives. Through the Word we hear His voice; in prayer He hears ours. It is then I am renewed in spirit for He “restores my soul” (Ps 23:30). There we are transformed when we behold “as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). There we get direction for the path, comfort in our sorrow, encouragement to keep going and catch a broad vista of the possibilities before us. Yes, we need time communing with Him.

WHAT IS BIBLE DOCTRINE?

DEFINITION: The word “doctrine” is simply “teaching” and can refer either to the act of teaching or that which is being taught. There are two related Greek words used, *didache* and *didaskalia*. W. E. Vine explains, “Whereas *didache* is used only twice in the Pastoral Epistles, 2 Timothy 4:2

and Titus 1:9, *didaskalia* occurs fifteen times. Both are used in the active and passive senses (i.e., the act of teaching and what is taught), but the passive is predominant in *didache*, the active in *didaskalia*; the former stresses the authority, the latter the act (Cremer). Apart from the Apostle Paul, other writers make use of only *didache*, save in Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7 (*didaskalia*).”

TEACHING THE APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE

“The things that thou hast heard of me...the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

1. Be Aware: Sheep, while eating, have their eyes only inches from the ground. That is one reason they need shepherds. One name for shepherds is “overseers.” The elder should be able to see over his little flock to notice any dangers at a distance—while there is still time to react and protect the sheep. Coming storms, strangers, thieves, and predators, each re-

quires a different response, but we can't wait until the problem is on us. Then it is too late.

How can we be aware? We ought to know the influences that are affecting the church at large and our assembly in particular. There are some periodicals that may help to keep elders apprised of trends and approaching dangers.

2. Be Prepared: Of course, what we really need is preventive medicine. Nothing will help as much as knowing the truth. With the plumbline in your hand, you will be able to distinguish easily between straight and crooked doctrine. Here are some helpful books to give a framework at least for a careful, consistent study of Bible doctrine: Strong's *Systematic Theology*, Ryrie's *Basic Theology*, Thiessen & Walvoord's *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Lockyer's *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, Heading & Hocking's *Treasury of Bible Doctrine*, Chafer & Walvoord's *Major Bible Themes*, Tatford's *The Faith: A Symposium*,

Hoste's *Studies in Bible Doctrine*, etc. Of course you will apply the Berean principle to these books. When eating the meat, don't choke on the bones. Keep good notes. Take your time and do it right.

3. Be Careful: This is no place for sloppy thinking, for approximating. The three rules for Bible doctrine are:

1. Accuracy
2. Accuracy
3. Accuracy

Don't be afraid of calling someone in on your deliberations. When speaking on doctrine, feel free to read carefully crafted definitions of the truths being discussed. Anticipate areas where young Christians could easily misunderstand. Be available after for questions and clarifications.

We ought to be even more careful handling these "holy things" than the priests in Israel as they functioned in the tabernacle. They had the shadow; we handle

the substance. This is true of all doctrine, but especially of those relating to God, the impeccability of Christ, His perfect humanity, His full deity, the value of His death, etc. All the vessels were holy, but what of the Ark in the “holiness of holinesses”? This is no place to try out pet theories or ad lib.

4. Be Thorough: If ever the adage is true—“A job worth doing is worth doing well”—this is it!

i) Understand the progress of the doctrine. “The Bible is not simply a compendium of doctrine, nor are its doctrines arranged systematically. The wonder of God’s Word is that in it we are faced with an almost unstudied presentation of the loftiest of truths in order to spur us to even the lowliest of duties” (C. E. Hocking, *Treasury of Bible Doctrine*).

ii) Be as extensive as you can in unlocking the fullness of the doctrine. Often we stop too soon, just before the full impact of the truth

dawns on us. Jesus said, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life” (Jn 6:27). It is labor. Therefore the call to search the Scriptures is not merely a turn of phrase.

iii) Always study in the context but remember that ultimately every truth must be seen in the context of the whole Bible. You can take not only a verse, but a chapter (1 Cor 13) or even a whole book (James) out of context.

iv) Remember: “the truth is in Jesus.” All doctrine should exalt the Lord in our hearts. He is the truth. You may share with the saints your analysis, but don’t forget the synthesis! When it comes together, doctrine should show us Him.

v) All true doctrine is “practical theology.” There is always a “therefore.” The fourfold aim and effect of the proper application of biblical truth is to teach sound doctrine, refute false doctrine,

correct bad morals, and instruct in good morals (2 Tim 3:16).

PAUL'S WARNINGS ABOUT DOCTRINAL ERROR

With a Book having the scope, depth, and supernatural character which the Bible has, it is not hard to understand why, through the ages, there have been varying views of the doctrines contained in it. From the Bible's friends much error has come merely by having the truth out of place or out of proportion. From the Bible's enemies, there are the three tactics used by the serpent in Eden: doubt, distortion, and flat denial of God's Word. What is unfortunate these days is the difficulty in distinguishing between the Bible's supposed friends and its enemies! Paul warned Timothy about the last days. Here are those warnings:

1. A Vested Interest in Error: *"Charge some that they teach no other doctrine"* (1 Tim 1:3). Paul saw that there would be those that would debate issues rather

than teach the kind of doctrine whose fruit would be *"godly edifying"* (vv 3-4). As John Bunyan said, "Some love the meat; some love to pick the bones." The reason, Paul states, is simply this: sound (healthy) doctrine judges unsound living. If Timothy would war a good warfare, he must also have a good conscience (vv 18-19). Some people teach wrong doctrine, not because they don't know what is right, but because they do not want it to be true—it judges them and pronounces them guilty.

2. An Inconsistent Life: *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine"* (1 Tim 4:16). Paul was very concerned that Timothy's influence for God not be diminished by a lifestyle that did not match his teaching. Timothy's example of believers was to include his conversation, way of life, love, spirit, faith, and an unblemished life. How would this come about? By being attentive to reading the Word, exhortation, doctrine, the development of his gift, medita-

tion, and whole-hearted purpose of life. Only by examining his own life in the light of Scripture could he expect to be taken seriously when he attempted to teach others (vv 11-16).

3. A Careless Approach to Bible Study: *“Study to show thyself approved unto God...rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim 2:15). Accuracy is of prime importance in the understanding of doctrine. Biblical distinctions must be carefully maintained without making more of them than the Word does itself. For example, there are clear differences between Israel, the Kingdom, and the Church. Blurring these lines can lead to a view of Scripture that is consistently distorted on almost every page. Those who are careless in this way “subvert” their hearers and their influence is like a creeping gangrene (vv 14, 17), eventually overthrowing the faith of some. We are personally obligated to “purge” ourselves from such influences, “avoid” questions that lead us

into doubtful areas, and “not strive” with such who have “erred” (v 18), but gently instruct them in the truth.

4. A Lack of Appetite for Wholesome Food: *“The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”* (2 Tim 4:3). What happens when the audience’s taste is so overwhelmed by the leeks, onions, and garlic of the world that they lose their appreciation for the delicate flavor of heaven’s Manna? There will be teachers who are ready to change the menu to include nouvelle cuisine a la Egypt (v 3). They will turn away their ears from the truth “like a windmill whose owner has turned its vanes so that they will not catch the wind” (Wuest). And the result? You cannot live in a vacuum: they “shall be turned unto fables” (v 4).

“Experience shows...that agnosticism regarding a doctrine is the first step to denying it. The brother who says of a certain truth, ‘Well, I used to be-

lieve that. I'm not sure now...I don't think anybody can be sure on such points,' is probably a good half way to heresy. This type of agnosticism is increasing among believers with the increase of higher education. It is the fashionable cant of the intellectual world, the idea being that truth is unattainable anyway, and that orthodoxy is the badge of a low intelligence. But this position cannot be squared with Christianity. For Christian teaching is a dogmatic assertion of truth received by divine revelation. It is 'the faith once delivered to the saints'...To be a straw Christian—'carried about with every wind of doctrine'—may be a mark of intellectual sophistication, but it is not a mark of spiritual maturity.

—Frank Holmes,
"Correctness of Doctrine,"
Treasury of Bible Doctrine

NOTE: Appendix 3 is a fairly comprehensive list of Bible doctrines. Some elders may find it helpful to check how balanced the public ministry is from their platform. If there are substantial gaps, one then can move to stand in the breach. Remember that anything we fail to teach the devil will teach *his* way.

TEN TESTS OF ORTHODOXY

Here are ten questions to ask to see if a teaching could be dangerous to the flock:

1. **Does it demean the person of Christ, undermining His nature, offices or ministries?** I know He is "altogether lovely" so anything that makes me think less of Christ must be wrong.

2. **Does it elevate man apart from the cross work and his standing in the Lord Jesus?**

3. **Does it depend on an obscure verse or a forced interpretation?**

4. **Does it contradict the overall tenor of Scripture?**

5. **Does it unduly emphasize the Holy Spirit?** I know the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me. Any movement truly of the Spirit will emphasize Christ, not the Spirit.

6. **Does it excuse or encourage wrong behavior?** Right doctrine Paul calls "healthful."

7. **Does it confuse the distinctions between Israel and the Kingdom and the Church?**

8. **Does it focus on the temporal rather than the eternal, the material rather than the spiritual?**

9. **Is it a thinly disguised version of a contemporary secular trend?**

10. **Is it believed by those whose lives are inconsistent with Christian faithfulness?** (See 2 Tim 3:14.)

PRAYER DEFINED

Prayer is a vital resource provided to the believers by God so we may approach Him in a real and significant way. It is the means by which we communicate with God. The pattern of access is to the Father (He is the giver of all) in the Spirit (He helps our infirmity in prayer) and presented through the Son (because we are “accepted in the beloved”—e.g., Jn 14:14; Eph 3:14). We want to think, however, about the specific area of united prayer in the church.

KINDS OF PRAYER

- **intercession:** requests made for others, especially those who do not or cannot pray for themselves
- **supplication:** requests made for our own needs
- **imprecation:** never found in the New Testament; a request calling for judgment on enemies; in some Psalms
- **meditation:** a prayerful attitude

of expectancy as I consider the Word of God

- **confession:** an expression of contrition concerning a known sin
- **thanksgiving:** expressions of gratitude for the Lord’s blessings
- **adoration:** ascriptions of praise for who God is in Himself

PATTERN PRAYERS FOR OUR USE

We sometimes say to the Lord that we do not have the words to adequately express what should be said. While it is true that we will always come short, this side of heaven at least, He has provided us a Book full of God-ordained words! Both the Old and New Testaments sparkle with glorious examples of every kind of prayer, the highest of these being the prayers of the Savior Himself. These prayers are there to make them our own and pray them up to God. We know they match His will, being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

There are very few prayers of the Lord's disciples recorded in the New Testament. Jews, after all, understood the principles of prayer. But we Gentiles had no clear understanding of true prayer. And so Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, left on record a great number of prayers to stimulate our thinking in this holy art. Paul's prayers are expansive and inspiring. We would do well to make them our own and pray them up to a God who loves to

do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

PAUL'S PRAYERS

It is worth noticing that only one or two prayers of this whole list are requests for material or temporal things. All the others are praying down spiritual blessing or praying up spiritual thanksgiving and praise. We would do well to check the proportion in our public and private prayer life.

PAUL'S PRAYER JOURNAL

- Rom 1:8-10, Thanksgiving and Request
- Rom 7:24-25, Thanksgiving
- Rom 10:1, Request (for Israel's salvation)
- Rom 11:33-36, Worship
- Rom 15:5-7, 13, Requests for blessings
- Rom 15:30-33, Request for deliverance
- Rom 15:33, 16:20, 24, 27, Benedictions
- 1 Cor 1:4-7, Thanksgiving
- 1 Cor 4:1-7, Thanksgiving
- 1 Cor 14:18, Thankfulness
- 1 Cor 15:57, Thanksgiving
- 1 Cor 16:23-24, Benediction
- 2 Cor 1:3-4, Blessing God
- 2 Cor 2:14, Thanksgiving
- 2 Cor 8:16, Thanksgiving
- 2 Cor 9:15, Thanksgiving
- 2 Cor 13:7, Request for Corinthians' uprightness
- 2 Cor 13:11, 14, Benedictions
- Gal 6:18, Benediction
- Eph 1:15-23, Request for Spiritual Illumination
- Eph 3:14-21, Request for Spiritual Strength
- Phil 1:3-5, 9-11, Thanksgiving and Requests
- Col 1:3, Thanksgiving and a Request
- Col 1:9-13, Thanksgiving and Requests
- 1 Thess 1:2, Thanksgiving
- 1 Thess 2:13, Thanksgiving
- 1 Thess 3:11-13, Requests (for established hearts)
- 2 Thess 1:3, Thanksgiving (growing faith and love)
- 2 Thess 1:11, Request (God might count them worthy)
- 2 Thess 2:13, Thanksgiving (for God's choosing)
- 2 Thess 2:16, Benediction
- 2 Tim 1:3, Thanksgiving and Request (for Timothy)
- 1 Tim 1:17, Worship
- Phm 4-6, Thanksgiving (for Philemon's progress)

IN CONCLUSION

The regular, rich and practical teaching of the Word should be linked with instruction on being a student, teacher, and model of the truth. Add to that prayer times with up-to-date and heart-felt requests, and focussed, impassioned prayers, mixed with much thanksgiving—this is the way that makes for a vigorous local assembly, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

FOR DISCUSSION...

1. How do the Apostles' Doctrine and prayer contribute to the topics of the previous lessons (spiritual gifts, baptism and the Lord's Supper)?
2. Through the serious use of doctrine and prayer, how are Christ, other believers, the world, and we ourselves impacted?

Review:

1. Reflect on this statement: "...we can't wait till the problem is on us. Then it is too late. We ought to know the influences that are affecting the church at large and our assembly in particular." Summarize your thoughts below:

2. State the three rules for Bible doctrine:

- i) _____
- ii) _____
- iii) _____

3. What practical lessons for your own relationship with God did you learn from Paul's prayers?

DAY 3: WATCH & ANSWER

Fill in the blanks as you watch the video. TIP: It's helpful to pre-read the questions before watching. You can check the answers in the Answer Key (Appendix 10).

Introduction: God communicated with us through His Word.

What is Bible Doctrine?

1. Doctrine is the of the heart of God revealed to us in the Word of God.

2. To open His Book is to look into the of God.

3. Doctrine comes in three stages:

i) *Revelation* - the of God communicated to holy men (Moses, Job) so we can understand it.

ii) *Inspiration* - the truth of God passed through the hearts, minds and personalities of men so it was flawlessly onto pages of Holy Scripture.

iii) *Illumination* - the Holy Spirit takes the truth off the pages of Scripture and transforms us so we can live out the of God before men.

Apostles' Doctrine

1. It is to cover every aspect of doctrine and practice, and to equip for every good work.

2. It is revealed in various layers of truth:

i) - plain, clear, precepts

ii) - laid out in general terms

iii) - positive and negative, warning, teaching

Teaching the Apostle's Doctrine

1. In I Timothy chapters 2 and 6, are given on what to teach the saints.

2. If there are doctrines that are not being taught, that's where comes in.

3. In the course of five years, people in the local fellowship should really get a of the issues presented in Scripture.

Be Prepared:

1. Teaching should be appetizing, health producing. We need teaching that actually in us, is easy to absorb, invigorates us.

2. The joy in truth is not in knowing it but in it.

Be Thorough:

1. The rate of growth in a Christian's life has virtually nothing to do with how much they know. It has to do with how quick they are to what they learned.

2. Truth is - there's always a price to pay.

Tests of Orthodoxy:

1. We may speak of Christ as much as we wish and praise Him to the bound of our capacity without ever being by Heaven for exaggerating His excellencies.

THE CHURCH: MASTERPIECE OF THE AGES

2. The test of religions or of belief systems is what they think of .
3. The church has been designed to the glory of Christ and the glory of man.
4. There are four major themes in Scripture:
 - i) The Revelation of God's - prompts us to *worship*
 - ii) The Revelation of God's - prompts us to obey, to *cooperate*
 - iii) The Revelation of God's - results in *thanksgiving*
 - iv) The Revelation of God's - prompts us to carefully and rightly *divide the Word*

Prayer:

1. Our part in the process of prayer is to .
2. Paul leaves a record of his prayers so we might learn what "".
3. In prayer we can participate in the of God.
In prayer we are asking God to be our .
4. Pray prayers that are worthy of God; take advantage of his .
5. Turn everything in life into something to talk to God about. He wants us to be . He loves to my voice.

DAY 4: WRITE & REMEMBER

1. Record three significant statements from this chapter. Why are they significant to you?

A) **Statement One:** _____

B) **Statement Two:** _____

C) **Statement Three:** _____

2. Memorize **2 Corinthians 3:18**.

DAY 5: REFLECT & PRAY

Respond in prayer: Having looked carefully at the vital roles that doctrine and prayer play in the health of the Church, reflect on your own life in the following ways:

Praise: _____

Repent: _____

Ask: _____

Yield: _____

PRAISE: What specific blessing have you discovered in this lesson? Thank the Lord for it! **REPENT:** Is there something in your life that is hindering you from experiencing what you have just learned? **ASK:** What specific way would you like the Lord to help you live out these truths? **YIELD:** Is there a particular area in your life that needs to come under the Lord's rule?