

# Introductory Study



## Life Change Objectives

- To trust in the power of God's truth to change your life.
- To anticipate in faith the changes that learning doctrine will make in you.

## Developing a Christian Worldview

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

—Philippians 1:9–10

But you, dear friends, must continue to build your lives on the foundation of your holy faith.

—Jude 1:20(NLT)



## A Fresh Word

### *What Is Christian Doctrine?*

- Christian doctrine is an \_\_\_\_\_ of what the \_\_\_\_\_ about the most important issues of life.
- A working definition of theology is: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Why Learn Doctrine?

### ***Because knowing the truth about God helps me***

We are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place . . . for those who do not know about God.<sup>1</sup>

—J. I. Packer

Listen carefully to wisdom; set your mind on understanding. Cry out for wisdom, and beg for understanding. Search for it like silver, and hunt for it like hidden treasure. Then you will understand respect for the LORD, and you will find that you know God.

—Proverbs 2:2–5 (NCV)

Knowing God will make you wise;  
Knowing God will open your eyes;  
Knowing God will give you hope;  
Knowing God will help you cope.

—Kay Warren

### **Because knowledge is an \_\_\_\_\_**

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instructions [doctrine] about washings [baptism], and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

—Hebrews 6:1–2 (NASB)

### **Life without a foundation**

... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

—Ephesians 4:13–14

1. “Tossed back and forth by the waves . . .”

Without truth I am vulnerable to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “Blown here and there by every wind of teaching . . .”

Without truth I am victimized by \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Life with a foundation**

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

—Matthew 7:24–25

### **Because doctrine feeds my soul**

In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

—1 Timothy 4:6 (NASB)

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature.

—Hebrews 5:12–14 (NASB)

And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up.

—Acts 20:32 (NASB)

### ***Because knowing the truth enables me to serve others***

If you give these instructions to the believers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, as you feed yourself spiritually on the words of faith and of the true teaching which you have followed.

—1 Timothy 4:6 (GNT)

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Titus 1:9

### ***Because knowing the truth protects against error***

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

—Colossians 2:6–8

But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

—Hebrews 5:14

How can we equip ourselves and our kids for survival in a disintegrating culture? With \_\_\_\_\_ firmly believed, clearly taught, and consistently lived out.

### ***Because how I think determines \_\_\_\_\_***

For as he thinks within himself, so he is.

—Proverbs 23:7 (NASB)

### ***Because I am commanded to:***

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

—2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

Knowing the truth enables you to better *use* the truth.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Teach me to live according to your truth, for you are my God, who saves me.

I always trust in you.

—Psalm 25:5 (GNT)

I have been sent to bring faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives.

—Titus 1:1 (NLT)

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

—1 Peter 3:15 (NASB)

## **Warning: Knowledge all by itself can be very dangerous!**

- Knowledge must be balanced with \_\_\_\_\_.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

—Philippians 1:9–10

**Warning signs of knowledge without discernment:** Knowledge remains theoretical; one person or group becomes a person's exclusive source of knowledge.

- Knowledge must be balanced with \_\_\_\_\_.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

—2 Peter 3:18

**Warning signs of knowledge without grace:** Learning more about God without growing closer to God; legalism.

- Knowledge must be balanced with \_\_\_\_\_.

If I . . . can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing.

—1 Corinthians 13:2

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

—1 Corinthians 8:1

**Warning signs of knowledge without love:** Knowledge leads to intolerance of others; growth in knowledge leads to a growth in pride.

## Building a Foundation That Lasts

### Three Levels of Truth

Here's a brief look at what we'll be studying together. This chart helps you to see the different levels of learning that go along with grasping a truth. Being able to quote a truth does not mean I've fully grasped that truth.

To grasp a doctrine I must . . .	Learn It (understand the truth)	Love It (change my perspective)	Live It (apply it to life)
<b>The Bible</b>	The Bible is God's perfect guidebook for living.	I can make the right decision.	I will consult the Bible for guidance in my decision about _____.
<b>God</b>	God is bigger and better and closer than I can imagine.	The most important thing about me is what I believe about God.	When I see how great God is, it makes _____ look small.
<b>Jesus</b>	Jesus is God showing himself to us.	God wants me to know him better.	I will get to know Jesus through a daily quiet time.
<b>The Holy Spirit</b>	God lives in me and through me now.	I am a temple of God's Holy Spirit.	I will treat my body like the temple it is by _____.
<b>Creation</b>	Nothing "just happened." God created it all.	I have a purpose in this world.	The reason I exist is to _____.
<b>Salvation</b>	Grace is the only way to have a relationship with God.	I am an object of God's grace.	I'll stop seeing _____ as a way to earn my salvation. I'll begin doing it simply in appreciation for God's grace.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Faith is the only way to grow as a believer.	I grow when I see myself in a new way.	I'll spend more time listening to what God's Word says about me and less time listening to what the world says about me.
<b>Good and Evil</b>	God has allowed evil to provide us with a choice. God can bring good even out of evil events. God promises victory over evil to those who choose him.	All things work together for good.	I am battling evil as I face _____. I will overcome evil with good by _____.
<b>The Afterlife</b>	Heaven and hell are real places. Death is a beginning, not the end.	I can face death with confidence.	I will have a more hopeful attitude toward _____.
<b>The Church</b>	The only true "world superpower" is the church.	The best place to invest my life is in God's church.	I need to make a deeper commitment to the church by _____.
<b>The Second Coming</b>	Jesus is coming again to judge this world and to gather God's children.	I want to be living alertly for him when he comes.	Someone I can encourage with the hope of the Second Coming is _____.



## Discussion Questions

1. Since this is your first time together as a group, take a few minutes to get to know each other. Share your name, where you were born, and one reason you decided to participate in this study.
2. When did understanding the truth about the Bible first become important to you? Tell about a time when knowing a truth was a real lifesaver. How has a truth about God and faith
  - helped you to deepen your relationship with God?
  - kept you from making a terrible mistake?
  - made you better able to serve God and others?
  - encouraged you in a time of trouble or temptation?
  - given you a new sense of freedom in your life?
3. If doctrine is so important, why do you think so many people seem to have a negative attitude toward the teaching of doctrine? Why do people so often see doctrine as something dry and boring, or loud and dogmatic?
4. Discuss things you can do to make sure your knowledge does not get out of balance. Don't just talk about what others should do; talk about what *you can* do. List two or three specific things that will help you and your group keep your knowledge balanced with love and grace and discernment.



## Answers to Fill-Ins

organized summary	study the truth
Bible teaches	live the truth
faith seeking understanding	defend the truth
know God better	discernment
essential foundation	grace
circumstances	love
false teachings	
truth	
how I act	