

# \*The Heights Baptist Church \* Sermon Series: Doctrine\*

## \* Topic: What is Theology? \* Various Verses \* 1/11/26 \*

### MAIN POINT

God has presented His truth in His word, the Bible. As Christians, it is vitally important that we learn to know what we believe, and to ensure our beliefs are anchored in the Bible.

### INTRODUCTION

**When selecting a church to attend, how important is it to you to review that church's "statement of faith"? What kinds of things do you look for in particular?**

A typical Baptist church will include the following doctrines in their statement of faith.

The triune nature of God; the authority of scripture; salvation by grace alone; believer's baptism by immersion (After all, we are "Baptists" ☺).

A typical Unitarian Universalist "church" will include the following doctrines in their statement of faith. The inherent worth of every person; equity and compassion in human relations; acceptance of one another, whatever their beliefs or morals; a free search for truth and meaning; the goal of world community with peace for all.

**What major contrasts do you see between these two differing belief systems?**

*Today we begin a new sermon series at The Heights that will be looking at Christian doctrines. Pastor Randy Hahn introduces the new sermon series this way:*

*What is . . . is the name of our new series to begin January 11. Christianity is about truth claims and Jesus said that He is truth (John 14:6). More and more we live in a world where truth is just a mish mash of ideas and personal feelings, and since that is all it is, it can always change. The truths of Christianity are eternal, stable, and that which we build our lives on. We have all been challenged "to trust God," "have faith;" but what is it we are trusting? What am I having faith in when I have faith in God? This is about faith. It is about our life. It is about what God has communicated about Himself and us, and the world. It is about living in truth.... Recent surveys show a shocking lack of knowledge or disbelief in basic doctrine among American evangelicals, you know, the people who believe in the Bible. We are not in a good place at a time when we desperately need truth, need to know what and why we believe.*

**Note to study leader:** *In today's lesson, we will be introducing the series on doctrine by discussing the following questions:*

1. *What is doctrine?*
2. *Why is doctrine important?*
3. *How can we determine which doctrines are true?*
4. *How do we determine which doctrines are important?*

### UNDERSTANDING

#### 1. WHAT IS DOCTRINE?

Four definitions related to doctrine:

- Doctrine: A set of beliefs held by a person or church.
- Theology (Greek = "The study of God"): The study of God and related topics.
- Systematic Theology: A branch of theology that considers the whole Bible, and organizes doctrines into a consistent, logical, coherent whole. Our doctrine is determined by our theology.
- Hermeneutics: Principles for accurately interpreting the Bible.

## 2. WHY IS DOCTRINE IMPORTANT?

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

**Ask what reasons are given in these verses about why sound doctrine is important.**

- **Titus 1:9:** God commands us to fight for sound doctrine in the church.
- **2 Corinthians 11:3-4:** Satan uses false doctrine to deceive us.
- **1 Timothy 6:20-21:** False doctrine can cause people to wander from the faith.

**How would you summarize the warnings given in these passages?**

*“26 of the 27 books of the New Testament warn against false teachers and ideas, adding up to over 60 warnings. ‘To each his own’ is not really an idea of the New Testament”  
Pastor Randy Hahn (in his introduction to this sermon series)*

The world is telling us what our values are to be, what our beliefs are to be, and even how we are to interpret the Bible. A popular message these days is, “The Bible tells us to love everyone, so you’d better embrace my morality if you love me as the Jesus requires you to.”

*“We fight for right thinking inside the church, and for sharing the gospel outside the church.”  
Pastor Randy Hahn, The Heights Baptist Church, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

**As these verses are read, ask the class about the benefits of sound doctrine that are being described.**

- **John 5:39 and 2 Peter 3:18:** Helps us get to know God better.
- **2 Cor. 10:5, Eph. 4:14-15, and Heb. 5:14:** Helps us differentiate between God’s objective truth, mankind’s subjective, so-called truth, falsehood, and outright lies.
- **John 8:44 and 1 Tim. 4:1:** Protects us from Satan’s lies.
- **John 8:31-32, John 17:17, and Phil. 1:9-11:** Encourages us toward holy living.

## 3. HOW CAN WE DETERMINE WHICH DOCTRINES ARE TRUE?

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

**As these verses are read, ask the class about methods we can use to determine which doctrines are true.**

- **2 Timothy 2:15:** Study the scriptures.
- **2 Peter 1:20-21:** Apply sound principles of hermeneutics. More on this in the coming topic on “The Bible”.
- **2 Timothy 2:2 and 2 Timothy 4:3-4:** Surround yourselves with sound teaching. This includes selecting a Bible teaching church and reading commentaries from respected authors.
- **Acts 17:11 and 2 Corinthians 11:4:** Apply critical thinking to what we are being taught.

We need to measure what we think, what the world thinks, what our church thinks, and even what a Bible verse says, against the whole Bible.

*“You have to put me to the same measurement as you would one of them out there. We are always on high alert about ideas.... I’d like to think y’all can trust me.... Trust does not mean we shouldn’t take what I say (and ask)..... ‘How does that relate to what’s in the Bible?’.”  
Pastor Randy Hahn, The Heights Baptist Church, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

#### 4. HOW CAN WE DETERMINE WHICH DOCTRINES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT?

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:3, 2 JOHN 1:9-11, AND REVELATION 2:14-16

##### **What do these verses say about which doctrines are the most important?**

The church is responsible for its doctrine. Sound doctrine should unite us in worshiping with true believers and separate us from worshiping with false teachers.

*Pastor Randy Hahn included these statements as part of his introduction to this sermon series:*

*“we will see some freedom to land in different places on what things mean and how we live.... Our church is made up with all kinds of church backgrounds to no background, and we come from not conflicting, but certainly some different doctrinal ideas. Our unity is Christ, and that means our unity is around what Christ taught. That is the goal of this series: understanding all that has been taught and developing a fresh unity and devotion to God and each other around that.”*

We can see from those comments, there are levels of importance in church doctrines. Some doctrines are essential to our faith and should unite us as Christians and divide us from false teachers. There are also doctrines that are very difficult for finite humans to exactly understand, such as how God’s sovereignty works with mankind’s free will. \*One way to rank the importance of various doctrines is along these lines:

**Level 1:** Essential Christian doctrines. Examples include The deity of Christ, and salvation by grace alone through faith.

**Level 2:** Important doctrines for the spiritual health of the church. Example: God’s definition of marriage and handling conflict.

**Level 3:** Important doctrines that we don’t need to divide over. Example: The timing of the rapture.

**Level 4:** Doctrinal gray areas. Example: Eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols.

**Level 5:** Unimportant doctrines. Example: The exact number of years Israel was in slavery in Egypt.

*\*These levels of importance were modified from a list in the book, “Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage” by Gavin Ortlund.*

Some doctrines may lie somewhere between or overlap in these importance levels.

#### APPLICATION

**What are you most excited about learning in this upcoming series?**

**How does our theology affect our day to day life choices?**

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATTHEW 7:24-27 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1

**What lessons from these verses should we apply to our study of doctrine?**

Both of the men heard the words of Jesus. The man who built his house on the rock is the one who put Jesus’ words into practice. We should not be studying doctrine solely for the sake of increasing our knowledge. We need to apply it to our lives and keep our focus on building others up in love.

#### PRAYER

Pray that God’s Spirit would help us understand scriptures, and that we would help us take His command seriously to teach sound doctrine and to refute those who oppose it. Pray also that God would develop the fruit of love in our lives; love for God, love for our fellow believers, and love for the lost.