

**A Case For Doctrine**  
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**July 19, 2007**  
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Dr. Luke, inspired writer of both *Luke* and *Acts of the Apostles*, documented the focused dedication of the first Christians. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)<sup>1</sup> From the very first converts in the first Christian congregation, personal and corporate devotion to apostolic doctrine was one of several identifying features of primitive Christianity. As one reads the latter epistles of the New Testament, a “... repeated emphasis on sound, healthy and good doctrine implies that a body of teaching had now emerged which was generally accepted, and which should serve as a standard of orthodoxy.”<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine of Jesus Christ as imparted to and recorded by the hand picked apostles of Jesus and those they directed is an absolute essential to the formation and the continuation of the Christian faith even to this day. Without the teachings or doctrines of Jesus, religion may still exist, but the Christian “faith, once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) will not exist.

This foundational and fundamental premise of being devoted to the apostles’ doctrine is again under fire. Jamie Buckingham, former senior editor of *Charisma*, is reported to have stated, “We cannot have unity based on doctrine. Doctrine will always divide the body of Christ ... the only way we can have unity is to have it around Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup> It is a false choice logically and a false doctrine Biblically to attempt to separate the doctrine of Christ from the person of Christ. The Apostle John speaks of the “doctrine of Christ” (2<sup>nd</sup> John 9) and the Apostle Paul unmistakably ties being a good servant of Christ with the “words of the faith and of the good doctrine.” (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:6) Rob Bell, in commenting on a Christian’s resolve and ability to simply “get back to the Bible and just take it for what it really says,” states “Now please understand that this way of thinking is prevalent in a lot of Christian churches, . . . but this view of the Bible is warped and toxic, to say the least.”<sup>4</sup>

Preachers of the true gospel must remember that the essence of the calling to ministry has never been to be stimulators of thought, but rather to be preachers of the Word. While some object to the presence of doctrine in contemporary and make the preaching of doctrine out to be

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptures are quoted from The Holy Bible NKJV, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1955 Ed., s.v. “Doctrine” by T.Rees.

<sup>3</sup> Jamie Buckingham, as quoted by David W. Cloud. “the Strange History of Pentecostalism,” available from <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/strange3.htm> (accessed July 19, 2007)

<sup>4</sup> Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 53-54

the culprit that divides the body of Christ, “the truth is . . . False doctrine divides. True doctrine UNITES.”<sup>5</sup>

What is doctrine? Two words are translated from the original Greek language of the New Testament as doctrine or teaching. According to W.E. Vine, both *didache* and *didaskalia* can refer to the act of teaching or the substance of teaching, depending on the tense and context in which they are used.”<sup>6</sup> A doctrine is a statement about a specific truth. IT is a God-given statement in the form of objective, propositional truth, not to be confused with a human viewpoint, perspective or opinion. Today is not the first time in history when men have confused the “doctrine of God with the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:9)

Why does doctrine matter? Gary Holloway cites three reasons: “[1] Only by doctrine can we give a reasonable answer to questions. [2] Doctrine is important to make us spiritually healthy. [3] Doctrine helps us think God’s thoughts after Him.”<sup>7</sup>

Harvey Bream admonishes the church regarding the critical significance of doctrine:

Post a guard against pride... post a guard against materialism, ...post a guard against hedonism, the god of pleasure, ... and post a guard against false doctrine. Paul admonished the elders of the great Ephesian church (Acts 20:28,30,31), *‘keep watch over yourselves and all the flock which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers ... even among your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard.’*<sup>8</sup>

Devotion to true apostolic doctrine (*didache*) was one of the clear and unmistakable earmarks of the first Christians. The test of whether or not one was considered a genuine disciple was determined by an individual’s acceptance of and agreement with the teachings of the apostles. (See 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:6) Doctrine still has its place in today’s church. In fact, it has an essential place if the church is to continue to be the church and if the sinner will continue to be genuinely converted to Jesus Christ. No matter what the issue of faith or life, one should turn to the Bible for, “somewhere in scripture – look for it – God has spoken.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Terry L. Peer, “The Doctrine of Christ and the Apostles” (Lecture delivered at Louisville Bible College, August 21, 2006)

<sup>6</sup> W.E. Vine, *Complete Expository Dictionary and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 180.

<sup>7</sup> Gary Holloway, Randall Harris, and Mark Black, *Theology Matters: Answers for the Church Today* (Joplin: College Press, 1998), 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey C. Bream, Jr., “We Prayed To God and Posted A Guard,” *The Restoration Herald* Vol. LXXXVI No. 8 (August 2007):5.

<sup>9</sup> F. LaGard Smith, *The Cultural Church* (Nashville:21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian, 1992), 71.