

More Jesus, Less Doctrine

by Ben Gieselbach

someone to raise his/her hand in frustration and remark, "Can't we talk more about Jesus, and less about doctrine?"

At face value, it is hard to disagree with this sentiment. "Yes, more Jesus, less doctrine!" others may quickly chime in. And whatever Biblical discussion you had will come screeching to a halt.

Behold, the *More-Jesus-Less-Doctrine* person has arrived! He is a brave new explorer in the world of holiness. He is discovering new heights of righteousness by rising above those silly, immature older Christians who care about the 'details.' "These people talk too much about issues I have risen above," this brave pioneer thinks to himself, condescendingly.

Well, what do you propose Christians talk about instead of "doctrine"?

"Let's talk about Jesus." So you want to talk about Christology (the study of what the Bible says about Christ)? That's all doctrine.

"Well, let's talk about God's grace." So you want to talk about Soteriology (the study of what the Bible says about salvation)? That's more doctrine.

"Let's talk about making the church more welcoming." So you want to talk about Ecclesiology (the study of what the Bible says about the church)? Any discussion about the church is going to be about doctrine.

"Let's talk about heaven." Oh, that's Eschatology (the study of what the Bible says about the hereafter). No way around doctrine here!

It is not unusual, during a Biblical discussion about some peripheral issue (*dressing for worship, modesty, the role of women in worship, denominationalism, etc.*), for

There's no escaping doctrine.

You can't discuss things like grace, salvation, faith, hope, belief, worship, heaven, or hell without it. And you certainly can't have Jesus without doctrine.

Jesus said no one could come to Him unless they were drawn by hearing and learning what was taught by God (John 6:44-45). He rebuked those who "know not the scriptures" (Matt. 22:29) and challenged people to separate man's doctrines from God's doctrines (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7-9). The crowds were astonished at His doctrine (Matt. 7:28), and He warned Christians about following false doctrine (Rev. 2:14, 24).

May I be blunt for a moment? **You don't love Jesus if you don't love His doctrine.** I'm only repeating what Jesus said in John 14:15.

In fact, I would venture to say, you measure how much you love Jesus by how eager you are to keep His commandments.

You can't love Jesus without caring about what He taught.

Try having a substantive conversation about Jesus without His "doctrine." You'll have more luck putting out a forest fire by yodeling at it.

You simply can't be a Christian without knowing what He said in His New Testament. How would you even know what a faithful disciple of Jesus looked like without knowing the teachings of Jesus through the writings of His apostles? Where would you start?

Newborn Christians continued in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42) and they filled whatever city they were in with that doctrine (Acts 5:28). They were saved from sin by obeying doctrine (Rom. 6:17) and were told to avoid teachers who altered that doctrine (Rom. 16:17). It was possible for Christians to be carried away by strange

doctrines (Eph. 4:14; Heb. 13:9). They were to avoid the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1), and they were warned that some would not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim. 2:1).

Because of this, young preacher Timothy was commanded to devote himself to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13) and to labor in preaching and teaching doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17). It was important for Timothy to get that doctrine right; otherwise it would be blasphemy (1 Tim. 6:1) and would result in ungodliness (1 Tim. 6:3).

Trying to say something else?

To be fair, maybe our “more-Jesus-less-doctrine” friends understand that you can’t actually talk about Jesus without talking about doctrine. Maybe they just aren’t articulating what they are actually trying to communicate. Maybe they are on to something – we just have to figure out what that something is.

“More-Jesus-less-doctrine”-ers are right, if they actually mean the following:

Don’t neglect the weightier matters of the law.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. (Matt. 23:23)

It is important to talk about ‘peripheral’ issues. As much as I may dislike talking about issues like how to dress for worship, fellowship and denominationalism, discipline, the gift of the Holy Spirit, or homosexuality, Christians need to have conversations about these things. If Christians can divide over these things – and if the Bible talks about these things (or principles that relate to these things)—we need to talk about them.

However, if you talk about peripheral issues without your ultimate focus being on Christ and Him crucified, then you are neglecting the weightier matters of the law, just as the scribes & Pharisees did in Jesus’ day. Every Biblical discussion must be in the context of holiness and faithfulness to God. Peripheral matters are not an end to themselves, but a means to becoming a better disciple of Jesus.

Don’t confuse man-made traditions with God-given doctrine.

“Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” gets on Jesus’ nerves (Matt. 15:9), and can you blame Him? I’ve met more than one Christian who was unable to separate traditions from the actual teachings of the New Testament. Have we become so intellectually lazy that we are unable to think critically in our pursuit to restore New Testament Christianity?

We must remember the phrase “Jesus unites; doctrine divides” is theological nonsense. Jesus & His New Testament unites (cf. John 17:20-21); it is preference confused as doctrine that actually divides.

Make sure your attitude is right.

Sometimes people clumsily associate doctrinal discussions with bad attitudes. They might think this because they have seen too many people with bad attitudes take part in doctrinal discussions in the past. We can sympathize with this.

I know a guy who nearly always demonizes anyone who disagrees with him over doctrinal matters. If you highlight inconsistency in his logic, he will simply spew poison at you. He’s a bitter, unpleasant man. He has an attitude problem, not a too-much-doctrine problem.

It’s hard to blame people for having a knee-jerk reaction to this kind of person and assuming the “less doctrine” posture. But we need to remain level-headed and not make “more-Jesus-less-doctrine” a chip on our shoulder.

As we engage in doctrinal discussions, we must humble ourselves before the Lord (Jas. 4:10), understanding that it is possible to interpret His Word incorrectly sometimes. Just as a loving attitude covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), so does a humble attitude (cf. Luke 18:9-14). We must always recognize there is room for all of us to grow as we walk in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pet. 3:18).

Conclusion

Tired of hobby riders, hypocritical Christians, religious jargon spouters? Me too! But “more Jesus, less doctrine”? I can imagine a doctrine-less conversation about Jesus sounds a lot like the kind of conversations many New-Agers and Millennials had in their apartments the week pot was legalized in Colorado.

Why can’t we have both more Jesus and more doctrine?

Perhaps our “more-Jesus-less-doctrine” friends mean something else. If they mean, “How does this doctrinal matter fit in the context of pleasing Christ?” they are right to ask the question. If they mean, “Are we adequately separating tradition from God’s Word?” They are right to ask the question. If they mean, “Are our attitudes right as we discuss doctrine?” They are right to ask the question. But we must never minimize doctrine itself. To minimize doctrine is to minimize Jesus.

Let’s get doctrine right, so we can get Jesus right.

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Westhill Works

Benevolence Program - Dickie Russell

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House to House, Heart to Heart
Preaching Students - Southwest School of Bible Studies
The Truth in Love - www.ttil.tv
WVBS Online School - school.wvbs.org

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Prayer List

Velma McDougald was able to return home last week.

Bill Abercrombie also returned home after some extended tests.

Amy Haden had gall bladder surgery on Wednesday.

Bud Moore is home and doing better.

Paul Slaughter has been having trouble with his blood pressure lately.

Meagan Gould has been feeling some better, but is still taking cancer treatments.

Dalton McCullough has been improving and may come home soon.

Our sympathies are extended to **Vera White** at the loss of her brother last week.

Continue to Remember: Bill Abercrombie, Don Bowen, Melba & Eleanor Bower, Ruth Moore, Henry & Eula Parrish, Irene Ross, Helen Strange, Pat Wheat, Melissa Armstrong, Barbara Wrinkle.

Military: Clay Bayes, Jason Book, Alston Compton, Robert Johnson, Josh Moehring, Ryan Payne, Douglas Ramsey, Ryan Stewart, Morgan Weaver, and Payton Weaver.

Announcements

We are saddened to hear of **George Christian's** passing last Wednesday. Funeral services will be held Thursday, April 2, at the National Cemetery in Dallas at 1:15 pm.

Congratulations to the Cammocks on the birth of Simon James. If you'd like to send a monetary gift, see Julie Dilbeck or David Shastid by TODAY.

5th Sunday Today! Everyone is invited to join us for lunch and fellowship followed immediately by our second service led by the young men. We will not meet at 6:00 PM.

Westhill Ladies' Day Saturday, April 11 at 8:30 AM. Sign up in foyer or online. ****We need** used metal (not plastic) watering cans & tea cups with or w/ out saucers (not heirlooms) for decorating. See Vicki Ivy or Donna Drain for more information.**

Southwest Youth Day, Saturday, April 11. We will leave at 11:30 AM. Please, eat lunch before. Dinner will be served at the Southwest building. We should arrive back around 8:30 PM. Sign up in the foyer.

Southwest Lectures Tuesday, April 14. at 6:00 AM. Please, sign up if you'd like to go. We need at least 8 to make the trip.

Meet & Greet for newly weds Chris and Courtney (Nelson) Neiman on Sunday, April 26 after the evening service.

Birthdays This Week:

March 29 - Thomas Saunders

March 30 - Claire Haden, Miranda Weaver

March 31 - Jim Howard, Neta Marshall

Next Week's Bible Class

II Samuel 6-9

Uzzah Touches the Ark

Records for March 22, 2015

Bible Class	157
AM Worship	228
PM Worship	150
Wednesday	nc
Contribution	\$7,416.82

Privileged to Serve

Song Leader	Mark Blaylock
Opening Prayer	Billy Roughton
Communion Leader	David Baumgartner

Communion Servers	
James Ainsworth	Wade Braly
David Dilbeck	Brian Hand
James Horn	Clay Jackson
Percell Milton	Greg Olsen
James Olsen	Billy Roughton
Jose Sosa	Justin Williams

Closing Prayer	Jim Haden
Nursery	Christie Beamon, Jenniffer & Dayanara Sosa

PM Song Leader	Young Men
PM Opening Prayer	Young Men
PM Closing Prayer	Young Men

Wed. Song Leader	Jimmy Horn
Wed. Devo	Paul Stewart

April Contact Elder	Paul Stewart - 903.872.3464
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