

Do You Know What You Believe?

Ask the average church attender what their church teaches, and he will proudly proclaim: *My church teaches the Bible!*

O ... K ... but what does your church teach *from* the Bible?

I searched for what churches are teaching. I looked at popular sermon series, as well as Bible study topics people gravitate to, and I found these popular themes:



- Prayer
- Doubt
- Sex
- Marriage and Family
- Money and Finances
- Building Community
- Finding Purpose
- Being an Influencer
- Fear
- Self-Image

Can you see why these topics are popular? Almost all of them focus on the individual. *How can I be a better me? How can I make my life more meaningful? How can I be happy?*

There is value in addressing these issues, but they must be addressed from a biblical worldview. They must be understood and applied from a biblical standpoint. For this to happen, we must first be grounded in solid biblical doctrine.

Doctrine and theology cannot be separated from the rest of life. Doctrine is not just another category of learning—history, science, the arts, and theology. Doctrine speaks into how we understand and live out all other disciplines.

Before we jump into “hot topics” like marriage, finance, and so forth, we must begin with a focus on who Christ is. A right understanding of sin, salvation, the nature and character of God, and sanctification lay the foundation for the understanding and application of issues related to ourselves.

I’m sure those who preach and teach would affirm this, and they feel good because “their people” are grounded in biblical truth and doctrine. But before you pat yourself on the back and move on to another blog, let me pose a couple of questions:

Are you sure? How do you know?

Recent surveys from Lifeway Research found among Americans:

- 54% say religious belief is a matter of opinion, not objective truth.
- 59% believe the Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being.
- 55% say Jesus was created by God.
- 52% do not believe Jesus is God.

Before you dismiss this—“*Those statistics relate to Americans in general, not evangelical Christians*”—consider how those same statements fare among Evangelicals:

- 46% believe the Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being.
- 65% say Jesus was created by God.
- 30% do not believe Jesus is God.

Other findings in the same survey about Evangelicals:

- 43% disagree that every sin deserves eternal death.
- 40% believe God rewards faith with material blessings.
- 22% believe gender identity is a matter of choice.

Here’s my plea to pastors, teachers, parents, and grandparents:

Don’t assume. Don’t assume those under your care are grounded in their faith or the essential core doctrines of Christianity. Those core doctrines include:

- The inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible
- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit
- The nature of sin
- Salvation by faith alone in the work of Christ



The Bible study resource I am a part of—*Bible Studies for Life*—is launching just such a study. We choose to call this study *Essentials of Christianity* instead of *The Essentials of Christianity* because, while we look at seven key doctrines, we do not want to imply that these are the only essential beliefs. But it’s a good place to start!

It is critical that every believer be grounded in doctrine because what we believe in these matters colors our beliefs in other areas. What we believe speaks into our ethics, morality, and how we live our lives day to day.

Yes, doctrine is that critical.

“Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

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