



RE:LIT

DOCTRINE

WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD BELIEVE

MARK DRISCOLL & GERRY BRESHEARS

Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe

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Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Patrick Mahoney (Re:Lit)

First printing 2010

Printed in the United States of America

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Hardback ISBN: 978-1-4335-0625-3

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-0626-0

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-0627-7

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-2311-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Driscoll, Mark, 1970–

Doctrine : what Christians should believe? / Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears.

p. cm. — (Re:Lit: vintage Jesus)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-0625-3 (hc) — ISBN 978-1-4335-0626-0 (pbk)

ISBN 978-1-4335-0627-7 — ISBN 978-1-4335-2311-3 (ebk)

I. Theology, Doctrinal. 2. Bible—Theology. I. Breshears, Gerry, 1947–
II. Title. III. Series.

BT75.3.D75

2010

230—dc22

2009031861

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

RRDC 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10
14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

By Pastor Brad House, Community Groups Pastor, Mars Hill Church

The purpose of this book is not to simply inform you of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. The goal behind it is to do more by challenging you to live out your faith in life and practice. Belief without action is no belief at all, as we see in James 2:14–26. The goal of this section is to guide you and your group through a discussion of what you have learned and how it should apply to your life. For each chapter you will find:

- *Introduction*: A reminder of the main idea in the chapter.
- *Discussion*: A general question meant to spark conversation during a group's pre-discussion dinner or mingling time.
- *Examination*: A list of questions to encourage your group to engage the biblical text related to the topic for group examination.
- *Application*: A list of questions designed to apply the doctrine examined to your personal life and experience.

This study format is not meant to be a rigid formula, but we hope that it provides a means for intentional study, discussion, and life application. Although it is designed for a group discussion, we hope it is also helpful for personal study.

CHAPTER 1: TRINITY: GOD IS

Introduction

We begin our study of essential doctrines of the Christian faith with the question, who is God? It is paramount that we distinguish and clarify whom we worship when our culture defines God in so many different ways.

Thankfully God has revealed himself to us through Scripture so that we may know him and glorify him.

Discussion

If asked, how would you distinguish God from the countless false gods promoted and worshiped in our world?

Examination

- How is the Trinitarian nature of God revealed in the Old and New Testaments?
- What are the three biblical truths that are brought together with the doctrine of the Trinity?
- Find three places in Scripture to support each of these truths.
- How is the statement in John 3:15 a reflection of the Trinity?
- What does the Trinitarian nature of God reveal about him?

Application

- How do you personally resonate with the human longings (e.g., community, relationship, humility, peace) rooted in the Trinitarian nature of God?
- Why is a right understanding of the Trinity essential to our faith?
- How does the doctrine of the Trinity affect your worship of God?
- Which of the doctrinal errors or false views of God are you most familiar with or wrestle with personally?
- How does your life reflect the Trinity?
- Which of the practical implications listed in this chapter is most significant to you and why?

CHAPTER 2: REVELATION: GOD SPEAKS

Introduction

God has revealed himself to us so that we might know him and worship him. Our understanding of his revelation and our view of Scripture will dramatically affect our understanding of all other doctrines.

Discussion

How does your view of the Bible affect all other doctrinal beliefs?

Examination

- What is the fundamental purpose of God's revelation through Scripture?
- What is the difference between general and special revelation?
- How does Jesus view the Bible?
- Who wrote the Bible, and why is it important to distinguish between the different views on inspiration?
- What is inerrancy, and why can we trust the Bible?

Application

- How do your views of Scripture align with what the Bible testifies about itself?
- What does it mean that the Bible is authoritative? How does it relate to other authorities?
- How is the Bible personally sufficient for your life?
- What have you learned in this chapter about interpreting Scripture?
- How is your view of Scripture evident in your life?

CHAPTER 3: CREATION: GOD MAKES*Introduction*

The way we view our world begins with our understanding of our origins. How did we get here and why? This chapter examines these origins as revealed in Scripture. There is plenty of room for debate over some aspects of creation, but the fundamental truths of creation are essential for clear doctrine.

Discussion

How does understanding your origin affect your worldview?

Examination

- What are the debatable or open-handed views of creation?
- What are the essential or closed-handed views of creation?
- What does the creation indicate about the character of God?
- Which Christian view of creation best describes your understanding of creation? What are the biblical strengths and weaknesses of your view?
- What effect can a wrong view of creation have on your understanding of life and theology?

Application

- How does your understanding of creation affect your view of God?
- How does the purpose of creation affect your view of your life and world?
- Why is it important to have a clear understanding of open-handed issues related to creation?
- Which non-Christian views of creation have had the most effect on your understanding of creation? How has Scripture clarified those views?

CHAPTER 4: IMAGE: GOD LOVES

Introduction

Our purpose in life is rooted in the fact that we are created in the image of God. In this chapter we explore what it means to be created in God's image and how that should affect the way we view God and ourselves.

Discussion

What does it mean to be human?

Examination

- How does Genesis 1 distinguish humankind from the rest of creation?
- In your own words, what does it mean to be created in the image of God?
- In what way does the doctrine of image speak into modern-day gender issues?
- How has the idea of *imago Dei* changed the way you look at yourself and humankind in general?

- In what ways did Jesus image God in his humanity?

Application

- What are the dominant worldviews regarding the nature of humanity in your culture?
- How are they in opposition to the doctrine of *imago Dei* found in Scripture?
- How does a nonbeliever image God? How does that change the way you view the unregenerate?
- In what ways does your life image God well, and in what ways does your life reflect a false image of God? What does repentance look like in these areas?

CHAPTER 5: FALL: GOD JUDGES

Introduction

In order to understand the condition of our world, and ultimately the plan for redemptive history, we must know the origin and nature of sin. This chapter deals with both of these topics biblically.

Discussion

What evidence do you see in nature and culture that reveals truth behind the idea that something is broken?

Examination

- What is sin?
- How were Adam and Eve tempted to rebel against God? How were their sins the same and how were they different?
- How have we been affected by original sin? How has this affected our relationship with God?
- What is the difference between total depravity and utter (or absolute) depravity?
- How does God view and respond to sin?

Application

- In what ways has your view of sin been challenged by this chapter?
- In what ways are you tempted as Adam and Eve were tempted?
- How does sin affect your ability to abide in Jesus?
- How do you respond to sin in your life? How do you respond to sin in others' lives?
- Where in your life is God calling you to specific repentance in regard to your view of sin and your response to it?

CHAPTER 6: COVENANT: GOD PURSUES

Introduction

In the last chapter we explored the origin of sin. Next, we turn our attention to God's plan for redeeming his creation and restoring it to its original glory.

Discussion

How do you respond to people who hurt, betray, and/or disregard you?

Examination

- What is a covenant?
- Why is it necessary for us that God covenanted with us?
- What are the five features of God's covenants with his people?
- As we look at the Old Testament covenants, how is Jesus foreshadowed in each?
- How is Jesus the fulfillment of each of these covenants?
- What is the new covenant and what makes it superior to the others?
- How would you use the doctrine of covenant to explain the gospel?

Application

- How is God's response to being sinned against different from your response?
- In what ways is a covenant different from a contract?
- What does the doctrine of covenant teach you about the character of God?

- What covenants have you made, and how are they reflected in the gospel?
- How does your life reflect the heart of God to covenant with his people and where do you need to grow?

CHAPTER 7: INCARNATION: GOD COMES

Introduction

The pinnacle of God's pursuit of worshipers is manifested in the incarnation. In Jesus, God enters into human history so that his perfect grace and justice can be satisfied in the only possible way.

Discussion

What do you find most amazing about the Creator of the universe entering into human history as a man?

Examination

- What does *incarnation* mean?
- Why is the incarnation necessary for the redemption of humanity?
- Why is the role of prophecy important to the incarnation, and what does it teach us about the character of God?
- What support do we find in Scripture that Jesus was fully God and fully human? Why are these two points significant?
- What do we learn about the character of God in Philippians 2:5–11?
- Why is the incarnation a pivotal doctrine of Christianity?

Application

- How does the incarnation affect your view of God?
- How is the incarnation a source of comfort for you personally?
- Do you relate more to the deity of Jesus or to the humanity of Jesus, and why? What are the pitfalls of overemphasizing one to the detriment of the other?
- How does your life reflect the incarnational image of God?

CHAPTER 8: CROSS: GOD DIES

Introduction

God's ultimate act of love culminates with his pouring out his wrath on himself so that those who believe may be saved. "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

Discussion

Whom would you be willing to die for?

Examination

- Why is it imperative for the redemption of mankind that Christ literally died?
- Explain the following terms in your own words with regard to redemption:
 - Atonement
 - Propitiation
 - Justification
 - Ransom
 - Expiation
- How is God's wrath poured out on Jesus an act of love?

Application

- What implications does *Christus Victor* have on the way you approach sin and freedoms in your life?
- In what practical ways do you look at the life of Jesus as an example for how to live yours?
- What have you personally learned about God in this chapter, and how does it change the way you worship him?
- How should you live your life differently in light of and in response to the atonement?

CHAPTER 9: RESURRECTION: GOD SAVES

Introduction

No doctrine is more critical to the Christian faith than the resurrection. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” It is clear from Paul that we cannot take this doctrine lightly. It defines our faith, and our salvation itself rests on its truth.

Discussion

Why would our faith be futile if Christ had not risen from the dead? (1 Cor. 15:17).

Examination

- What does it mean that Jesus was resurrected?
- Why is the resurrection central to the gospel?
- What is the most compelling evidence of the resurrection for you personally?
- Why do you think there are so many attempts to explain away the resurrection?
- What are the consequences of denying the resurrection? How would this affect other areas of theology?
- How does the resurrection speak to our eternal life in Christ?

Application

- Which views of death and the state of being after death have shaped your view of afterlife?
- Are there any areas of the resurrection that you have had trouble with?
- What does it mean to you that you are united into Christ in his death and resurrection? (Rom. 6:1–14).
- In what ways does the resurrection give you hope and change the way you live?

CHAPTER 10: CHURCH: GOD SENDS

Introduction

The church is not a building or a stoic institution; it is the living, breathing vessel through which God preaches the gospel and draws worshipers to himself. The correct understanding of the church should excite and motivate us to participate in the work of the gospel.

Discussion

What ideas contribute to a view of the church as being an institution rather than a people?

Examination

- What is the church and what is its purpose?
- Why is the leadership structure of the church important?
- What are sacraments, and what is their role in the church?
- What is church discipline? Why is it vital to a healthy church?
- Why is it important to become a covenanting member of a church?

Application

- What views of the church have you had that were challenged by this chapter?
- How do you see the church fulfilling its role to make disciples for God's glory? Where do you participate in that role?
- What is your role in the church? How are you being faithful to this role and how are you not?
- If you are not a member of a church, what is keeping you from becoming one?

CHAPTER 11: WORSHIP: GOD TRANSFORMS

Introduction

Our lives testify to the fact that we were created to worship. The question is what or whom we worship. Sin is the result of worshiping created things

rather than the Creator, God. God built us to worship him, and when we do, we are most satisfied and filled with joy.

Discussion

Where do you see worship as a common practice inside and outside the church today?

Examination

- How is worship related to the doctrines of image and Trinity?
- In what ways does worship express our doctrinal beliefs?
- What is idolatry, and how is it related to worship?
- How do we break free from idolatry and begin to worship God in spirit and truth?
- How does understanding sin as a worship problem change your approach to addressing it?
- What should true worship do in and through our lives?

Application

- How has your understanding of worship been changed or enriched by this chapter?
- When do you find it natural to worship, and when is it a struggle?
- How has idolatry affected your life and the lives of those around you?
- What does worshipping Jesus look like for you as a lifestyle?
- How has worship led to transformation in your life?

For Additional Study

- 1) Who or what are your external idols?
 - Who or what is the lord that rules over your life, determining how you live?
 - Who or what is your judge? Whose approval are you living to earn?
 - Where do you give the firstfruits of your wealth?
 - Where do you give the firstfruits of your time?
 - What people and things take the majority of your life?

- What do you plan and pray for?
- 2) Who or what are your internal idols?
 - What false beliefs do you hold about God?
 - Which parts of Scripture do you deeply doubt or even disbelieve?
 - Deep down in your heart, whom or what do you love, cherish, treasure, and long for the most?
 - Deep down in your heart, whom or what do you despise and hate the most?
 - Who or what makes you happiest? Why?
 - Who or what makes you saddest? Why?
 - 3) Who or what is the mediator between you and God?
 - Whom or what, other than Jesus, do you use to get closer to God?
 - Who or what, if taken from your life, would cause you to not walk as faithfully with God?
 - How do you define yourself, especially when introducing yourself to others?
 - 4) Where is your functional heaven?
 - When daydreaming about escaping this life, what does your functional heaven look like, and how is it different from the real heaven?
 - On earth, where do you run for your safety or comfort (e.g., the fridge, alcohol, the television, a person, a place, a hobby)?
 - 5) Who or what is your functional savior?
 - What is your picture of hell in this life (e.g., being single, not having children, being poor)?
 - Who or what do you use to save you from what you fear (e.g., a relationship, children, money, shopping, sex)?
 - 6) What good thing has become a god thing?
 - Which idols are in your life that, when appreciated and/or stewarded correctly, are means of worship but instead have become objects of worship (e.g., work, family, health, friendship, pleasure, leisure, hobby)?
 - If you could obtain or change one thing or person in your life, what would that be?
 - Which idols are you selling to others?

To Read:

Best, Harold M. *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Lane, Timothy S., and Paul David Tripp. *How People Change*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006.

CHAPTER 12: STEWARDSHIP: GOD GIVES*Introduction*

How we view and act regarding money and possessions tells a lot about our heart and theology. Scripture talks about money frequently because of its propensity to become an object of our worship. A proper understanding of money, however, allows us to use it to advance the gospel and bring glory to Jesus.

Discussion

How is God's view of money different from the view of money in our culture?

Examination

- What is stewardship, and how is it related to the character of God?
- How is stewardship a response of worship?
- How is the stewardship of our time, talent, and treasure related to the character and glory of God?
- What is the ultimate purpose of the spiritual gifts and treasure that God has given you?
- What is the difference between the Old Testament tithe and stewardship?

Application

- How does the way you view and use money reflect the condition of your heart?
- How has your view of money been challenged by this chapter?
- What does your stewardship reveal about who or what you worship?

- How are you using your time, talent, and treasure to glorify God?
- In what areas of time, talent, and treasure do you need to repent and grow?

CHAPTER 13: KINGDOM: GOD REIGNS

Introduction

God's redemptive plan for history will culminate in the return of Jesus and his kingdom. His return will be glory for those who believe and judgment for those who don't, displaying his perfect grace and justice to his glory.

Discussion

What do you think eternity will be like? What informs your picture of heaven?

Examination

- What is the kingdom of God?
- How will we participate in this kingdom?
- What is Jesus' role in the kingdom of God?
- How will Christians be judged at the end of their life? What awaits nonbelievers?
- Why is it important not to dismiss the doctrine of hell?

Application

- How has your view of death and the afterlife been challenged by this chapter?
- What have you learned about God's character through this study of his kingdom?
- What about eternity and the reign of Jesus are you most excited about?
- What informs the common objections to the doctrine of hell?
- What gives you confidence that you are going to heaven?
- How has God changed and challenged you through this study on doctrine?