

Doctrine Matters
Acts 19:1-20
Rev. Brian Bill
November 6-7, 2021

How many of you dreaded pop quizzes in school? This week, I learned this is an actual phobia for some people called “testophobia.” I want to begin with a pop quiz to see how well we understand some key doctrines.

1. The Holy Spirit is...
 - a. An impersonal force
 - b. The soul of Jesus
 - c. The third member of the Trinity
 - d. A ghost at Halloween

[The correct answer is c]

2. Baptism is...
 - a. Essential for salvation
 - b. A mark of maturity
 - c. A step of obedience
 - d. Optional for the believer

[The correct answer is c]

3. Demons are...
 - a. Not real
 - b. Harmless
 - c. Caricatures of evil
 - d. Fallen angels

[The correct answer is d]

4. Repentance is...
 - a. Reserved for non-Christians
 - b. Turning from sin

- c. Saying sorry
- d. Only needed for big sins

[The correct answer is b]

The word “doctrine” scares some people, others start snoozing, some think of doctrinal disagreements, and others are delighted because it helps them understand God better.

Our English word “doctrine” is derived from the Latin word, *doctrina*, which means, “*that which is taught.*” Tim Challies writes, “*Doctrine is the way the central themes of God’s revelation in Scripture are summarized and taught.*” To say it more simply, doctrine is a body of belief drawn from the Bible. Doctrine can be divided into various categories like the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of the church, and the doctrine of end times.

In 1 Timothy 4:6, Paul gives Timothy props for the “***good doctrine that you have followed.***” In 1 Timothy 6:3-4, he cautions against doctrinal error and elevates the importance of accurate doctrine: “***If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.***”

The Bible refers to false doctrine as dangerous and detrimental to our faith with phrases like: “***worthless doctrine***” (Jeremiah 10:8), “***every wind of doctrine***” (Ephesians 4:14), “***doctrines of men***” (Colossians 2:22), “***doctrines of demons***” (1 Timothy 4:1), and “***strange doctrines***” (Hebrews 13:9). Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more Christians dissing doctrine, deconstructing their faith, and openly embracing apostasy.

Doctrine matters because what we believe affects how we behave. Titus 1:1 links knowing with growing: “***the knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.***” Titus 2:10 frames it this way: “***In everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.***” We’re to demonstrate our doctrine by allowing it to dress up our lives.

We could say it like this: *Right beliefs should lead to righteous behavior.* We see this in many of Paul’s letters where the first section deals with our position in Christ and the second half with our practice. For example, Ephesians 1-3 is filled with doctrine, while chapters 4-6 focus on duty. In the Book of Romans, chapters

1-8 deal with doctrine, chapters 9-11 describe a beautiful doxology, and chapters 12-16 call us to demonstrate our discipleship.

As we come to Acts 19 in our *On Mission* series, I see 10 different doctrines. Some of these doctrines are developed, while a few appear in embryonic form. Since the Book of Acts is transitional in nature, coming between the Gospels and the Epistles, we should expect some doctrine to be incomplete. God's revelation is progressive, meaning He gave more of His inspired Word after the Book of Acts.

Before we begin, I want to let you know we normally take the first weekend in November to consider the plight of the persecuted church and to pray for our suffering brothers and sisters. Because the next section of Acts 19 deals with persecution, we'll address this topic next week.

1. The doctrine of missions. In Acts 19:1, we see how Paul continues to take the Great Commission seriously by going with the gospel and helping people grow into disciples who make disciples: ***“And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus.”*** In Acts 18:21, Paul told the Ephesians he would return if the Lord willed, and now, a year later, while on his third missionary journey, he is back in Ephesus. Paul travelled from the intellectual center of Athens, to the immoral city of Corinth, to the evil society of Ephesus.

Matthew 28:18-20 commands us to take the gospel to the whole world. Jesus tells us in John 14:6 that He is the only way to the Father. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells us where we're to be His witnesses: ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***

Ephesus was home to the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was the principal center for magic and was considered the citadel of Satan. Paul was in Ephesus because the Ephesians needed to be set free from spiritual bondage.

At a meeting of Baptist leaders in the late 1700s, a newly ordained minister named William Carey stood to argue for the value of overseas missions. He was abruptly interrupted by an older pastor who said, *“Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, He'll do it without consulting you or me.”*

In response, Carey wrote a paper called, *“An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens.”* He argued that the Great Commission applied to all Christians, and he castigated fellow believers of his day for ignoring it.

Carey didn’t stop there: in 1792 he organized a missionary society, and at its inaugural meeting, he preached a sermon containing this urgent call, *“Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!”* Within a year, he was on a ship headed for India.

2. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit. While in Ephesus, Paul found some disciples of John the Baptist, whose doctrine of the Holy Spirit was deficient. Paul asked them a question in verse 2: *“And he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’”* Matthew 3:11 tells us John predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit, but they somehow missed this.

In verses 6-7, we see what happened after they were corrected: *“And when Paul laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all.”* We know from Romans 8:9, the Holy Spirit comes on all who are born again: *“Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”* According to Acts 10:44, the Holy Spirit *“fell on all who heard the Word.”*

Speaking in tongues and prophesying are not the normative signs of receiving the Holy Spirit. God’s pattern for today is sinners hear the Word, they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they immediately receive the Holy Spirit, and then they are baptized.

The speaking of foreign languages was helpful to gospel proclamation because Ephesus was a multilingual city. In addition, like in Acts 2, this would serve as a sign of the Holy Spirit’s coming. 1 Corinthians 14:22 adds that *“tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers.”*

In his book called, *“The Forgotten God: Reversing our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit,”* Francis Chan writes: *“While no evangelical would deny His existence... there are millions of churchgoers across America who cannot confidently say they have experienced His presence or action in their lives over the past year. And many of them do not believe they can.”*

Right beliefs should lead to righteous behavior.

3. The doctrine of baptism. When Paul realizes they have some wrong beliefs about baptism, he does some teaching in verses 3-5: *“And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ They said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ And Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of Jesus.”* John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance that *looked forward* to the coming of Christ, while Christian baptism *looks back* to the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection.

BTW, this is the only place in the New Testament referring to anyone being rebaptized. The way I see it, this was their “first” baptism. In a similar way, some of you were baptized as a baby (like I was) and after being born again, you were baptized. Biblically speaking, your first baptism didn’t count so you weren’t really rebaptized; you were baptized for the first time as a believer.

We believe the Bible teaches baptism is a step of obedience for born again believers whereby they publicly identify themselves with the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ vividly pictured through the waters of immersion. Our next baptism services will be held the last weekend of November.

4. The doctrine of salvation. We see this in verse 8: *“And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.”* Paul’s practice was to preach in synagogues as he took the gospel first to the Jew, and then to the Greek. The word **“boldly”** means he *“kept at it without constraint.”* He reasoned with their minds *and* appealed to their wills, striving to convince them to surrender to Christ.

As Charles Spurgeon once said, *‘It’s the whole business of the whole church to preach the whole gospel to the whole world.’ The cure is the gospel. You know it and I know it. So let’s do something about it.”*

Paul was passionate about his fellow Jews being saved. He was willing to go to Hell if it meant they would go to Heaven. Listen to Romans 9:2-3: *“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”* In Romans 10:1, he summarized his deep longing: *“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.”*

John Knox, one of the leaders of the Scottish Reformation, picked up on Paul's passion when he made this urgent plea, *"Give me Scotland or I die!"* Oh, that we would say, *"Give me my family for Christ or I die, give me my neighbors or I die, give me the Quad Cities or I die!"*

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5. The doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification is the process where we are set apart from sin, so we can serve the Savior without hindrance. The idea is we become more holy in how we live. At Edgewood, we use the word **"grow"** to remind us of the necessity of becoming more like Jesus. Check out verses 9-10: ***"But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."***

Whenever God's truth is proclaimed, some will reject the truth and will harden their hearts, becoming stubborn in their unbelief. Psalm 95:8 says, ***"Do not harden your hearts."*** Following the admonition of Jesus in Matthew 7:6: ***"Do not throw your pearls before pigs,"*** Paul didn't waste his time with those who didn't want to grow.

Instead, Paul focused on those who were faithful by renting out a community center, ***"reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus."*** One Greek manuscript indicates he discipled disciples from 11am to 4pm every day. If this is true, he taught six hours every day for two years, which would be between 15,000-18,000 hours of discipleship and leadership training, showing how much doctrine mattered to Paul!

As a result of this intentional exhortation and equipping, ***"all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."*** Ephesus became the evangelism sending area for the entire region of Asia. During this time, Colossians 4:13 tells us churches were planted in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Wouldn't it be great if the entire QCA heard the Word of the Lord as a result of you and I living on mission in our neighborhoods, campuses and workplaces?

This makes me think of John Wesley's statement, *"The world is my parish."* Years ago, I was moved to make this my conviction as well. Wherever God has us

serve, I don't want to just see my role as a pastor of a local church, but as pastor to the entire community. I don't mean for that to sound arrogant because it is very humbling to serve the community, and ultimately the world.

6. The doctrine of miracles. Our God is a God of miracles as stated in Psalm 77:14: ***“You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.”*** Basically, a miracle is an act of God beyond human understanding which displays God's power, inspires wonder in humans, and acts as a sign that God is at work in the world. We see this in Acts 19:11-12: ***“And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.”***

The word ***“extraordinary”*** means ***“special or unusual.”*** Miracles don't happen all the time, but they do happen. Because there was so much magic in Ephesus, these miracles were evidence of God demonstrating power over satanic forces. These handkerchiefs were like sweat bands Paul used when he worked. As far as I know, this is only incident like this that took place.

I remember watching a preacher on TV hype some holy handkerchiefs, so I decided to learn more about how to get one. I discovered a ***“Be Made Whole Prayer Cloth Weekend”*** is coming up in two weeks.

Referencing this passage from Acts 19, the website contained this text: ***“As people touched the transferable anointing God placed on the cloth, they were healed. A simple piece of cloth can work in the same way for you! Maybe you'll never make physical contact with Pastor [I deleted his name]. But you can still experience the anointing that God has placed on his life...because the anointing is tangible and transferable. YOUR MIRACLE AWAITS YOU! Reach out by faith through this simple point of contact...a prayer cloth.”***

This promise was so compelling I decided to see what would happen if I clicked on the button to receive a holy hankie. I was taken to another page where I was asked to donate \$50, \$100, \$1,000, or even more. I took a pass.

There have always been spiritual charlatans but don't miss the truth that God still does miracles today. If you doubt miracles, you're on shaky ground because the Bible is filled with them. God created the world out of nothing, we believe in the miracle of the virgin birth, the miracle of the incarnation, the miracle of the

resurrection, and the miracle of having our sins forgiven and becoming a new creation! In addition, Jesus performed some 37 miracles recorded in the gospels.

Right beliefs should lead to righteous behavior.

7. The doctrine of demonology. As our culture slides further and further into decadent depravity, there's been a resurgence of interest in the occult today. We see in verses 13-16 how Ephesus was filled with demonic activity: ***“Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.’ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?’ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”***

These Jewish exorcists were misusing the name of the Lord Jesus. It was a common belief that evoking a powerful name granted special powers. Historians don't believe Sceva was a high priest, so these seven brothers were likely just making it up to give them some credibility.

Interestingly, the evil spirit was well aware who Jesus was. The word for ***“know”*** means the spirit knew Him personally. The spirit ***“recognized”*** Paul, which means he knew about Paul, but he didn't recognize these charlatans. The phrase, ***“But who are you?”*** is emphatic, and was spoken with disdain. Jesus and Paul had authority but these seven had no power over the evil spirit.

As a result, the demonized man sprang upon them like a panther, tackling them to the ground. While trying to tap out, the demon ripped off their clothes and tore into their bodies, causing severe wounds. Mark 5:3-4 gives a description of a demonized man who lived in a cemetery: ***“He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.”***

Instead of casting out demons, these men were catapulted out of the house, humiliated, and horrified. Brothers and sisters, we are in a spiritual battle. Demons are real, and must be respected.

Pastor Ray, president of Keep Believing Ministries, one of our Go Team partners, has written an excellent brand-new booklet called, “The Armor of God.” It’s one of the most helpful treatments I’ve read on the topic of spiritual warfare. We have free copies in the lobby (if we run out, I’ll order some more this week). You can also download a free PDF by going to keepbelieving.com. It’s so helpful I want to read some of what he wrote.

The best trick the devil ever played was convincing the world he doesn’t exist. *If people don’t believe you exist, they won’t try to stop you.* That’s one cause of the church’s weakness today. We fail to take the devil seriously... We are ignorant of his strategy, his power, his vast army, and his infernal plans.

We live on a rebel planet controlled by the devil himself. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been thrown into a spiritual conflict that rages all around us. *In that conflict, every believer is on the front lines.*

When we face these temptations, we may be sure Satan has us in his crosshairs. *That’s exactly the moment when we need to “put on the whole armor of God”* (Ephesians 6:13). The command “put on” is a military term. It’s the last step you take before going into battle. It’s like cleaning your rifle, checking your ammo, putting on your flak jacket, and grabbing your helmet. *Take up your armor, Christian, because all hell will soon break loose against you.*

Then, Ray walks through how to put on each piece of the armor of God.

Right beliefs should lead to righteous behavior.

8. The doctrine of the supremacy of Christ. We see this in verse 17: ***“And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.”*** Word spread quickly, leading people to fear evil and revere Jesus. One of the reasons the early church grew so rapidly was because they were in awe of God.

- Acts 2:43: ***“And awe came upon every soul.”***
- Acts 9:31: ***“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”***

To “*extol*” means, “*to enlarge, make great, magnify.*” Instead of belittling the name of Jesus, we must magnify His name! Psalm 34:3: “***Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together!***” When Mary reflected on the miracle of her pregnancy while a virgin, she sang these words in Luke 1:46: “***My soul magnifies the Lord.***”

9. The doctrine of confession. Christians should be quick to confess to God and to others. Confession of sin is the admission of what we did *and* the agreement with God that our actions or words were wrong. This is spelled out in verse 18: “***Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.***” Once Jesus is exalted, we can’t help but confess our own sins. The tense of the word “*came*” indicates believers “*kept coming, kept confessing, and kept divulging.*”

Are you tired of hiding your unholiness? Proverbs 28:13 says, “***Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.***” After trying to conceal his transgressions, David’s bones felt like they were melting within. Under deep conviction, he finally confessed in Psalm 32:5: “***I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.***”

Is there anything you have been reluctant to confess to God or others? James 5:16 says, “***Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.***”

10. The doctrine of repentance. These believers not only confessed their sins, but cut themselves off from those sins through specific and severe acts of repentance according to verse 19: “***And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.***” These books were manuals containing spells and incantations. To burn something has the sense of finality like in Deuteronomy 7:25, when the Israelites were told to burn false images in the fire. Plus, they were burned in the “*sight of all.*”

This was done at great personal cost. Many commentators estimate the value at \$10,000. Others suggest this was the equivalent of 50,000 days’ wages. One biblical scholar wondered if it was closer to \$4 million.

There might be a cost to eradicating idols, but the cost will be greater if you hold on to what is making you unholy. After reading this passage as a new believer at the age of 19, I broke my hard rock [vinyl] albums (like Black Sabbath and ACDC) because of their evil influence in my life. Is there anything you need to demolish right now?

Do you need to break off a wrong relationship? Throw away your Ouija board? Cancel cable or a streaming service? Stop watching horror movies? Put a blocker on your phone and computer? Do you need to flush some pills? Throw away some liquor? Change your number? Disengage from gaming? Cut up some credit cards? Sell a possession?

Repentance refers to changing our beliefs, which leads to changes in our behavior. It's the idea of heading in one direction, changing your mind, and heading in the opposite direction. This is fleshed out in Acts 26:20: ***“That they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”***

Verse 20 tells us what happened because of this confession and repentance: ***“So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.”*** The phrase, ***“continued to increase”*** means, ***“kept growing and continued.”*** To ***“prevail mightily”*** is to, ***“be robust and have force.”*** May the word of the Lord continue to grow and be robust with great force at Edgewood! I wonder what God would do here if we cultivated confession and reflected quick repentance? Would you join me in praying Psalms 85:6? ***“Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?”***

Interview with Traveling Team. The past several years, Pastor Kyle has invited a group called the Traveling Team to Edgewood to help ignite a passion for missions in our youth and young adults. Their organization has spoken to nearly a half million college students, seeking to mobilize them for world evangelization. They partner with college ministries like CRU, the Navigators, and InterVarsity. It's quite a privilege to have them here this weekend.

Since we've been learning why doctrine matters, I thought it would be helpful for one of them to answer just one question: ***“What are you seeing in the beliefs of college students today and how does discipleship help correct those errors?”***

The Ephesian church was a doctrinally solid church, but they let one extremely important matter slip. Do you know what it was? They had lost their first love for

the Lord. Jesus said in Revelation 2:4: ***“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”***

Jesus gave them a remedy for revival in Revelation 2:5: ***“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”***

- **Remember** – consider how far you’ve fallen
- **Repent** – turn around quickly
- **Repeat** – go back and do what you did before

All three of these are in the imperative tense, meaning they are commands.

One day we will face a final exam. If you know Jesus as your Savior, His perfect score has been applied to your report card. If you are not saved, you will fail and spend eternity in Hell. But you don’t have to. Simply repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Communion

Communion is a wonderful time to recalibrate and make sure our doctrine is leading us to discipleship, that right beliefs are causing righteous behavior, that our love for Jesus drives everything we do.

The Bible calls us to examine ourselves before taking communion. Do that now by remembering, repenting, and repeating.

Luke 22:19-20 records what Jesus said at the Last Supper: ***“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”***

We practice open communion here. You don’t need to be a member of Edgewood to participate, but you do need to be born again.

Directions for Opening Cup

1. Hold the cup with one hand and with the other find the clear tab and pull gently to open to take the bread.

2. Continue to hold the cup and now find the foil tab and pull carefully to open the juice cup. Be careful while pulling – you don't have to pull it completely off.

New Members – 9am

Alex and Chelsey Duncan

Jamie Snyder

Wanda Langfeldt

Diane Hanson

Nancy Bell