
Doctrine 101: What Is Doctrine, and Why Is It Important? (Pt 1)

Doctrine = Teaching (i.e. what is taught), and is sometimes translated such. The verb form of “doctrine” is “to teach.”

Doctrines = Usually Key Topics of Great Importance (though any teaching is “doctrine” in one sense). Sometimes this is referred in the Bible as “the faith” (the core beliefs – what must be believed).

5 Ways to Approach Doctrine (or Theology)

1. **Biblical Theology** – Studying doctrinal topics **in the context of the book, passage, section, or era in which it is found.** (Edenic, Noahic, Patriarchal, Mosaic, Acts, Paul, James, etc.). For example, studying in the Edenic era would limit what we can know of texts that address that limited time period from Creation through the Fall of man into sin. One might also study what Genesis has to say about a given doctrinal topic (God, or Sin, for example).
2. **Contemporary Theology** – The study of **recent or present-day schools of thought.** (Liberal, Neo-Orthodox, Radical, Socialist, Conservative, Evangelical, Fundamentalist, etc.)
3. **Dogmatic Theology** – The study of **officially formulated schools of doctrinal thought.** (Calvinistic, Arminian, Covenant, Dispensational, Catholic). This would examine each viewpoint & their arguments for how they approach doctrine as a whole, and doctrines individually.
4. **Historical Theology** – Studying **how thoughts on doctrine came about throughout history.** (Ancient, Medieval, Reformation, & Modern). Though people throughout time have sought to understand God’s truths, people in different eras focused on different key truths, and erred on others. For example, the early centuries focused (and fought over) the nature of Jesus, God’s Son. During the Reformation, one key doctrine fought over was salvation, and another was the nature of communion (was Jesus in the elements...). In later years, eschatology (last things) and ecclesiology (the church and how it operates) have been in focus.
5. **Systematic Theology** – **Collecting and arranging together information about a topic from anywhere it is found in the Bible.** This type of theology is what we most often think of and teach as “doctrine.” These doctrines are often categorized into 10 main areas. Doctrine classes at Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary, for example, largely divide up and teach doctrine this way.

Key Categories of Systematic Theology

Each doctrine has multitudes of sub-topics that can / are studied. We will give examples of a few for each.

1. **Bibliology** – The Doctrine of the Bible
How the Bible came to be; the canon (which books belong in the Bible); inspiration; inerrancy; sufficiency & reliability; translations of the Bible...
2. **Theology** – The Doctrine of God
Who God is; what God is; God as Creator; God’s characteristics (holiness, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, love, etc.); God’s sovereignty; the Trinity, three equal but different persons in one God...
3. **Christology** – The Doctrine of Jesus Christ
Jesus as eternal God before coming as a man; Jesus’ incarnation, taking on flesh; Jesus’ life, sacrifice, resurrection; Jesus’ return to judge and to reign...
4. **Pneumatology** – The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
Who is the HS?; what does the HS do? The Spirit’s baptism, filling, sealing; our grieving and quenching of the HS; the HS’s role in giving us the Bible...
5. **Angelology (and Demonology)** – The Doctrine of Angels
What are angels (and demons/the devil); why were they created; what do they do; what types of angels are there; the future of angels and demons...
6. **Anthropology** – The Doctrine of Man(kind)
The creation of man, gender, and marriage; man made in the image of God; the rebellion of man in Eden; the coming Son of Man (Jesus)...
7. **Hamartiology** – The Doctrine of Sin
What sin is; how sin came; how we are sinners; temptation; the world, the flesh, and the devil as sources of temptation; how God deals with sin; sin in the life of believers; sin in the life of unbelievers...
8. **Soteriology** – The Doctrine of Salvation
What it means; how one is saved; what occurs when one is saved; election; predestination; justification; sanctification, eternal security, glorification...
9. **Ecclesiology** – The Doctrine of the Church
What the church is; when the church started; Who heads & owns the church; the church’s purpose; the leadership of the church; the church’s challenges...
10. **Eschatology** – The Doctrine of Last Things (End Times)
How to interpret prophecy; the certainty of prophecy; prophecies through time; fulfilled prophecies; unfulfilled prophecies (yet to be fulfilled); specific prophecies and the timeline of the future, including the rapture, the tribulation, and the millennial kingdom; eternal punishment (for unbelievers) and eternal glory (for believers).

WHY Should We Study Doctrine? (Theology...)

God gave us His Word so we might know Him and His truth. We need to be trained in order to know and to think correctly about what is true & not true, and what is right and wrong. We need to know Who God is and who we are, and what is true so that we might see things accurately. Knowing basic doctrines (teachings) provides “truth blocks” or big ideas to build upon.