

Biblical Doctrine for Practical Living

Today we begin a new series that touches on a question that's often asked by some Christians: "How can deep biblical doctrine be helpful to me in my daily life?" This series will attempt to answer that question—at least in part. It's been about a year now since I first read an article which references the split that is, almost certainly, going to take place in one of the main line denominations over the issues of homosexuality and "same-sex marriage." This article, written by former Westminster Theological Seminary professor Dr. Carl Truman, deals not so much with the issues surrounding the split but rather, how did this denomination or any Christian denomination arrive at this place of such division. Truman declares that the foundational heart of this issue, is not so much the issue itself, but it's happened because of either not knowing—or knowing but compromising on—important doctrinal truths.

For example, one well-known bishop in that denomination has denied the eternal deity of Jesus Christ and has even denied the resurrection. This is heresy and yet he continues to be supported by many in that denomination as faithful to the scriptures and allowed to go on in his current role as a church leader. Truman goes further in the article to make the point that, if we're not catechizing our children; if we're not teaching doctrine in our churches and our denominations; if we're not *already* dealing biblically with some of these cultural issues, it's just a matter of time before division comes into any Christian denomination. Truman writes, "The Christian church cannot expect its rising generation of young people to hold the line on traditional sexual ethics and marriage if that generation is not properly catechized in the basics of the faith. Same-sex marriage is not really the issue. Thorough catechesis is." It's our doctrine that lays the rock solid foundation for our Christian lives and its doctrinal truth that we should've learned as children which will be there for us when we face issues in the church that may seem to have no connection to important points of doctrine. In this new series, we'll touch on the doctrinal truth that Jesus Christ is both God and man. This important truth matters for all of our lives even more than we may realize! We'll be looking, primarily, at John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Early in John's Prologue (John 1:1-18) we learn the doctrinal truth of our regeneration—our new birth. God is a *seeking* God and we are Christians only because *he sought us first* not, as is often assumed, because we sought him. In the early verses of John 1 we can see, primarily, two biblical truths. First, our new birth is *all of God*. Secondly, if we're truly born into the family of God our new birth brings with it a *radical transformation*. That being true, in our regeneration we have a new relationship to *God* as well as a new relationship to *sin*. We can apply these truths to our lives with the comfort of knowing that, although we're far from where we desire to be in faithful obedience to God, we can rest in our new birth in Christ even when we fall short *daily* of

God's perfect standard in thought, word, and deed.

John also wants us to know that the Word—Jesus—is Eternal, Personal, and Divine. In fact, John is giving us a beginning glimpse of the doctrine of the Trinity. In verse fourteen John gives us what has been called, “the most concise statement of the Incarnation” in all of scripture. To be sure, a proper understanding of the Incarnation must be seen in light of the Trinity. And ultimately the Incarnation cannot be separated from Christ's atoning work on our behalf. This doctrine is surely, as John Calvin said, “A very great mystery.” I want to focus on this extremely important verse one phrase at a time because the Incarnation is at the very heart of Christianity. John writes, “And the Word became flesh...”

Although we rarely hear debates in our day about the biblical teaching of the Incarnation, in the early centuries of the Christian church there was much debate. And the debate happened, not least, because this is a doctrine that boggles the mind. Late 19th and early 20th century Dutch Reformed theologian, Herman Bavinck writes, “The Incarnation of the Word is not a problem which we must solve, or can solve, but a wonderful fact, rather, which we gratefully confess in such a way as God Himself presents it to us in His Word.”

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.