

Weak Doctrine Equals Weak Christians

By Bob Young

The church must recognize and continually affirm the importance of doctrine. While doctrine and teaching are generally synonymous, in this article doctrine refers to a defined set of beliefs. The attitude or belief that “doctrine does not matter” is more and more prevalent in the contemporary church. Failure to define doctrine likely explains several realities in today’s church – lack of evangelism, lack of committed discipleship, young people who leave the church, new Christians who do not remain faithful.

Have you personally talked to many non-Christians lately? Especially in today’s uncertain world, unbelievers are seeking foundations, orientation, stability, something dependable – something to know, to live by, to depend on. Unchurched people expect churches to have beliefs. Unchurched people expect churches (and church members) to know what they believe and why. Because non-Christians expect churches to have a belief system to guide life, the church must define and declare its doctrine. Some studies have shown that strong doctrine enhances evangelistic outreach. Churches with clear doctrinal statements are generally among the fastest-growing religious groups. Lack of evangelism often signals a lack of doctrinal certainty. When the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who goes to battle?

Some Christians think that defining doctrines or beliefs will hinder evangelism. In our contemporary culture where tolerance is glorified, some Christians shy away from doctrinal certainty. Such is a grave error. If the teachings of the Bible cannot be known with certainty, we are all at sea, wandering without direction, foundering with no solid footing. The church must sound forth with a vibrant, valid voice in the uncertainties of today’s world. If the church cannot provide foundations, why would anyone want to participate in church?

Doctrine is important to unchurched persons; doctrine is also important to Christians. Christians must know what they believe and why. The Christian who lacks a well-defined belief system often struggles to realize a well-defined Christian walk. Christians who are not certain what the Bible teaches, or whether the teachings of Scripture are important, usually lack motivation and commitment for basic Christian activities.

Bottom line—doctrine matters! “If doctrine does not change your life, why have doctrine?”