

Introduction – Discovering Doctrines

- I'd like to begin our study by defining some terms
- Terms that will be used extensively throughout our time together
- I want to avoid any mystery and any confusion, if possible
- Let's begin with the term "doctrine"
- Where does it come from?
- What does it mean?
- Whenever I mention doctrine, I am speaking of the English translation of a word we find in 2 Timothy 3:16...

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"

- The Greek word we find translated "doctrine" here means teaching, instruction
- The text is referring to "that which is taught"
- But we're not just teaching the thoughts and ideas of man, according to this text
- When we say doctrine in this class, we mean that which the Bible teaches
- Let's begin with a very firm declaration: we are not here to examine what the church has to say
- We are not here to examine what I have to say
- We are not here to examine what you have to say
- We are not here to examine what theologians have to say
- We are not here to examine what experience tells us
- We are here to examine what the Bible teaches
- I want to explain how we will go about this
- But let's continue with our word study first
- You'll find the same word for doctrine translated differently in the New Testament
- Romans 12 has one example when speaking of spiritual gifts
- The context may be helpful for bringing out its meaning...

Romans 12:5-8

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

- Did you catch our word for doctrine?
 - It appears when referring to "he that teacheth"
 - The passage could just as easily say "or he that teaches, on doctrine"
 - Same word: didaskalia - doctrine or teaching
- We can make our way over to Romans 15:4 for another translation of the same word...

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

- The previous verse (Romans 15:3) quotes from Psalm 69:9 regarding the Messiah
 - This verse is referring to that which was written in the Old Testament
 - It was written for our "learning" or for our "doctrine"
 - Again, same word: didaskalia
- What about the Old Testament?
 - Do we find a similar word there?
 - Proverbs 4 is a good place to start in answering...

Proverbs 4:1-2

1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.
2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

- The Hebrew word for doctrine here means learning, teaching, insight
 - It's very similar to the Greek word
 - And it's translated the same way
- Here are two further examples in Proverbs, where it's translated "learning" ...

Proverbs 1:5

5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning [doctrine]; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

Proverbs 9:9

9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning [doctrine].

- Remember, wisdom comes directly from God
- And this instruction - this doctrine - is wisdom enunciated
- That which is directly from God outlined, explained, and organized
- We hope to do something very similar in this class

- Organize and present in a systematic way, that which comes directly from God
- This is just a brief summary of our thinking behind calling this a "doctrines" series
- It is a presentation of important teachings from scripture
- I think it's also important to explain and define the two primary ways we will present this doctrine
 - Both use the word theology
 - But I don't want us to be confused about that word
 - Because it is sometimes used broadly and sometimes used quite specifically
- We could (but haven't) added a modifier to our week three study
 - It's labeled "Theology," but could more specifically be labeled "Theology Proper"
 - Our friend Mark Herbster wrote about this in 2019 and said...

"The doctrine of God is the very foundation of all other theology and is therefore called 'theology proper.' The word 'theology' itself refers to speech about God. Theos means 'God' and logos means 'word.'

Theology proper is a systematic, theological approach to the biblical teaching concerning God's existence, His attributes, His deeds, His Persons, and His interaction with mankind."

- As you noticed, the modifier "proper" was used to eliminate confusion
- Because there is a broader definition of theology
- In fact, it was used within his definition of Theology Proper
- It also refers to the study of the nature of God, but adds the study of religious truth
- You could describe this use of theology as "rational inquiry into religious questions"
- Confusing?
- I hope we can make it less confusing
- Let's try to do so by talking about the two ways of teaching doctrine I mentioned
 - Both are using the broader definition of theology
 - And are labeled Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology
- Let's discuss what they mean
 - We can start by saying all theology must be Biblical theology
 - Systematic Theology is just a way of organizing Biblical theology
- Biblical Theology is the study of theology just as it is found within the context of scripture
 - Here's how it works
 - Choose a passage - study the passage - teach the theology found within it

- While we may identify other passages that help us understand that passage - we won't necessarily provide an exhaustive list of cross references for every theology mentioned there
 - Systematic Theology is the study of theology organized in logical, topical order
 - Here's how this works
 - Choose an area of theology - study a series of passages that are disconnected - and address that topic as thoroughly as possible
 - Individual sections of scripture may not cover all of that topic on their own - but individual sections of scripture must contribute to a more thorough understanding of the chosen theology
 - This series will feature both ways of presenting doctrine
 - Each week, we will address an area of theological study
 - Bibliology, Theology (Proper), Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Angelology, and Eschatology
 - Many passages of scripture will be introduced to help us understand that particular doctrine
 - But every Systematic Theology will be made up of the Biblical Theology we have already established
 - I like to think about it this way
 - If I assigned to you the reading and study of large sections of the Old and New Testaments
 - You would find a variety of individual topics addressed
 - The more you studied, the more you would see how these disconnected passages of scripture fit together
 - In your mind, you may have already begun categorizing and listing them in certain ways
 - Maybe you even started writing them down
 - Your process was Biblical Theology - addressing each topic just as it was found
 - But your result was Systematic Theology - creating a system for organizing each theological topic
 - Before we move on, let's establish some criteria for our Biblical Theology
 - How will we determine what the component parts of our Systematic Theology should be?
 - I'll start with a list, then we can take a closer look at each item...
1. Always consider the immediate context
 2. Always consider the historical context
 3. Always consider the "entire Bible" context
 4. Define words and phrases
 5. Find out what other people have said
 6. Consider deeply (meditate)
 7. Pray
- Many scriptures are quite simple
 - Our first reading is sufficient to give us a general understanding
 - Even a child can explain what many verses are saying

- Some others are quite complex
 - It won't matter (necessarily) which translation we are reading
 - Or if we are an experienced Bible-reader
 - The words and ideas of some Bible texts are difficult
 - They require more study
- I make no distinction between the simple and complex here
 - Each of these seven principles of Bible study can (and should) be applied to all
- Consideration of the immediate context should come rather easily
 - This is why we read whole chapters and whole books
 - So that when we come upon difficult verses, we are aware of what comes before and after
 - In many instances, our only hope for understanding a single verse is the context
 - Without it, we can (perhaps) apply almost any meaning
- With that being said, understanding the immediate context may require further study
 - Study of the historical context
 - Starting with the audience to which a passage was written
 - Their location
 - The circumstances in which they find themselves
 - There may be cultural factors from that era that we should take into account
 - We have some wonderful third-party sources available today
 - Many of which can help us fill in historical blanks
- No single passage (or topic within that passage) is found in isolation
 - Individual texts should be considered in light of the entire Bible
 - Scriptures that may lead us to believe one thing, may actually mean something else entirely
 - But we only know this because other passages - more clear passages - settle the issue
 - A single verse can lead us astray
 - That's why we must let the Bible be our most trusted commentary on itself
- Defining words and phrases from the original languages is easier than ever
 - There are countless good apps that help us with this
 - I personally use Bible dictionaries, concordances, and cross references from the Blue Letter Bible
 - This is because I want to know the meaning of difficult phrases
 - And I want to know how they were translated in other locations in scripture
 - These details can clear up a lot of confusion almost immediately
- It is also helpful to have another perspective
 - Asking a more mature Christian friend can be a good start
 - Consulting a good quality commentary is also a possibility
 - Our questions about the text have been answered before
 - Hearing or reading those answers can be a tremendous help

- The Bible also encourages meditation
 - This is deep thought
 - Serious consideration
 - Repeated readings of the text
 - Asking tough questions about its meaning
 - Let the text marinate before making a decision about it
 - And more importantly...
- Pray!
 - We must ask God to give us clarity of thought
 - An understanding heart
 - The right attitude
 - Readiness of mind to receive it
 - We need His guidance
 - For the Holy Spirit to intervene and show us the truth
- Everyone who teaches the scriptures should do everything we can to get it right
 - That's certainly what Paul and Silas did
 - But when they came to Berea in Acts 17, listen to what happened...

Acts 17:10-11

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

- The diligence, scholarship, and good faith of the teachers was not in doubt
 - In fact, the listeners received their teaching with a ready mind
 - But they also searched the scriptures themselves
 - To be sure that teaching was sound and from God
 - I would always encourage you to do the same
- There is one passage I want to read and discuss that I hope can serve as a model for what we do here
 - You'll find that if you turn to Hebrews 11...

Hebrews 11:1-3

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Or (verse 3) "Faith helps us understand that God created the whole world by his command. This means that the things we see were made by something that cannot be seen."

- There is a certain kind of systematic theology that is developed here
- On the topic of faith
- We're given the definition right from the beginning
- "Now faith is..."
- And everything we read in the chapter verifies this definition of faith

- All of it is from the Bible
- We can choose for ourselves to go back and read about every person, every action, and every circumstance mentioned
- The text makes an argument for a belief about faith

- Starting with Abel and Cain...

Hebrews 11:4

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

- Listen to this paraphrase of the same verse...

"Cain and Abel both offered sacrifices to God. But Abel offered a better sacrifice to God because he had faith. God said he was pleased with what Abel offered. And so God called him a good man because he had faith. Abel died, but through his faith he is still speaking."

- The writer of Hebrews relates the true stories of scripture
- In this case, from Genesis chapter four
- And with it provides teaching (or doctrine) on the subject of faith

- There is more teaching about faith two verses later...

Hebrews 11:6

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

- This teaching finds its origin in scripture too
- Through the life of Noah...

Hebrews 11:7

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

- Noah pleased God by believing in God
- By having faith
- And though he had not yet seen the judgement to come
- He built the ark God told him to build
- And when God condemned the world
- Noah and his family came out of it alive
- Rewarded for seeking after God
- Forever an example of faithfulness to the One True God

- There is more Biblical theology organized under the term faith starting in the next verse...

Hebrews 11:8-10

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

- Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen
- Made clear again in the life of Abram
- Who could not see the land, nor the promise of a nation, nor the blessing of the whole earth through his lineage: the Messiah
- But he went out
- And he demonstrated this kind of faith
- Verifying this teaching about faith
- With his very life

- This systematic theology (of sorts) is one of our models for this series
- Which we hope to make thoroughly Biblical
- But also organized in a way that will help us remember themes we may have already seen within our own study

- By way of introduction to some of our topics throughout this series
- I want to provide a more detailed personal doctrinal statement
- This was prepared as part of my service as a missionary a number of years ago, but has been recently updated
- It is not a document from the church
- It is my personal statement on Christian teaching and ministry
- But it touches on all of the primary areas of study we will address

- There are scripture references attached to nearly every point
- They are provided in support of the statement of belief under each heading
- There are some additional items on personal convictions in there too
- Those are needed in circumstances where ministries need to know a few more details on philosophy
- If you have any interest in getting a closer look at some of the key pieces of our study, please take one
- It follows all of the principles I have outlined in this introduction

Detailed Doctrinal Statement – Christopher Harper

The Scriptures

I believe that the Bible, in its sixty six Old and New Testament books, is verbally inspired by God, perfect, complete, without error, and should be the final authority for determining practices and principles of faith.

(II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:18-21)

The Godhead

1. The Trinity

I believe there is one God, eternally existent in three persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

(I Corinthians 8:6, John 10:30, John 14:16-17)

2. God, the Father (person and work)

I believe God the Father is that member of the Godhead that would decide before the world began to send His own son to be a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, lay the guilt of that sin upon Him, reject Him for that sin, lay our penalty of death upon Him, raise Him from the dead, seat Him at His own right hand, and commit all judgment unto Him. I believe His attributes, which include power, authority, perfection, love, and grace are most vividly shown in these actions.

(II Timothy 1:8-10, John 5:19-23, Hebrews 12:2)

3. God, the Son (person and work)

I believe Jesus Christ was born of a virgin being fully God and fully man, that He was willingly the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, He defeated death to live evermore, is our great High Priest, serves as advocate for His own before His Father, is preparing a place for the Saints, and will return to the earth to serve as King of Kings.

(Luke 1:30-35, 22:42, Revelation 1:18, Hebrews 4:14-15, John 1:1-14, 14:1-3, Revelation 20:4)

4. God, the Holy Spirit (person and work)

I believe the Holy Spirit is that Comforter that Jesus promised to His disciples, He is that person of the Godhead that convicts of sin and directs toward God's best. He makes it possible for His saints to determine the spiritual meaning of scripture, for He is that one that moved upon the hearts of men to write the scripture, and prophesy. He comes to live inside every believer, giving them gifts that will be for the edification of the body of Christ.

(John 14:16-17, 26, II Peter 1:21, Ephesians 4:11-13)

Creation

I believe God created the universe in six literal, twenty-four-hour days, resting on the seventh. All material in the world was created from nothing, with no assistance from purely natural phenomenon.

(Genesis 1-2:3)

Man (Creation, Fall, and Destiny)

I believe man was created in the image of God. Man's first representative, Adam, sinned against God, which brought the penalty of death upon the world. It is God's will that man be spared this penalty by embracing His son, the only perfect sacrifice for sin. Those who trust Him are promised an eternal home with God, those who do not will forever suffer the torments of Hell.

(I Corinthians 15:21-22)

Sin (Origin, Extent, and Effect)

I believe the first man, Adam, brought sin and death into the world through disobedience to God's command. The sin of this first man has been imputed to all other men since that time, so that all men are now born in sin, being sinful in their own thoughts, words and deeds. The stain and penalty of this imputed and continuing sin can only be removed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Apart from that removal, all men are destined for an eternity in Hell, separate from God.

(Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6, Isaiah 59:1-2, John 3:18)

Angels (Original Estate, Activity, and Destiny)

1. Satan

I believe Satan was cast out of heaven for setting his heart on the overthrow of God, only to bring glory to himself. He is that great deceiver that came to Eve in the garden to undermine God's authority and bring destruction to man, and God's creation. I believe he is a liar, a murderer, an accuser of the saints, and is constantly going about, seeking to destroy lives. His final destination is the lake of fire.

(Ezekiel 28:11-19, I Peter 5:8-9)

2. Demons

I believe demons are sinful angels, cast from the presence of God and bound in chains awaiting judgment. Some are the assistants of Satan and carry out his work in the lives of people. Their final destination will also be the lake of fire.

(II Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6)

Eternity

1. Heaven

I believe Heaven is that place that God has reserved for those that love Him and embrace His son Jesus Christ. It is a place where the Saints of God will fellowship with and worship their Savior with glorified bodies, free from the weight and penalty of sin.

(II Corinthians 5:1-3)

2. Hell

I believe Hell is a place of torment, a torment that is real, painful, and everlasting. It is a place of complete separation from God, and the destination of those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Luke 16:22-24)

Judgment and the Future State of Man

1. The Unbeliever

I believe those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, turning from their sin and embracing Him as their Savior are destined to spend eternity in Hell, separated from God.

(John 3:18)

2. The Unreached

I believe those who are unreached with the gospel are destined for Hell, assuming they have not embraced Jesus Christ. Understanding God's will is that all come to repentance, I must do all I can to proclaim the gospel, leaving the responsibility for those out of my reach to God and His abundant mercy.

(Romans 1:18-20, II Peter 3:9)

3. The Believer

I believe those who have genuinely placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ share His inheritance in the kingdom of God. Jesus himself is preparing them a place in Heaven, where they will eternally be with Him, worshiping in glorified bodies, free from sin and sorrow.

(John 5:24)

4. Infants

I believe infants are unable to come to the knowledge of the truth and are therefore exempt from accountability to God for rejection of Christ. I believe infants are born in sin, yet God, in His loving character, takes into account their lack of intellectual knowledge, choosing not to lay this sin to their charge.

(II Samuel 12:19-23)

Salvation

1. Salvation

I believe salvation is defined by a rescue from the penalty of sin through faith in Jesus Christ. We are called to embrace the salvation God offers through Christ, and proclaim that offer of salvation to every creature.

(Ephesians 2:8-9)

2. Regeneration

I believe regeneration takes place at the moment of salvation, when a sinner is resurrected from the grave of sinfulness and made new and alive in Christ Jesus. It is that which we would call second birth, marking the beginning of an entirely new life, free from slavery to sin, bondage to the power of death, being newly indwelt with the living Spirit of God.

(Ephesians 2:11-17, John 1:12-13, 3:1-21)

3. Justification

I believe justification is the act of being made right with God apart from your own merit, through the merit and action of Jesus Christ. Our just penalty for sin is death; our just redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one able to reconcile us to God through His own blood.

(Acts 13:38-39, Romans 3:22-28)

4. Redemption

I believe man was separated from God through Adam's sin, and therefore must be brought back into a proper relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Redemption is the event that occurs when we are saved that restores us to that former relationship with our Father in Heaven.

(Ephesians 1:5-7)

5. Faith

I believe faith is a genuine trust in something we cannot see, touch or otherwise recognize by our physical senses. It is a belief that can only come about through knowledge and understanding of scripture and its application to our lives regarding God and His way of salvation. Faith is necessary for salvation.

(Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 11:6)

6. Repentance

I believe repentance is a turning from sin that is sincere and lasting. It requires the repentant soul to reject their own desires and embrace God's will both at the time of salvation, and in any other instance in which their actions are unrighteous.

(Mark 2:17)

7. Grace

I believe grace is an unmerited favor that God gives to us, that is not based on our own behavior or characteristics, but rather on the behavior and characteristics of His son Jesus Christ. He offers this favor to us freely, if we will embrace and serve Him.

(Ephesians 2:8-9)

8. Propitiation

I believe propitiation is what took place when Jesus suffered and died on the cross to take our place, he replaced us on the cross, and was therefore the propitiation for our sins.

(Romans 3:22-28, I John 2:1-2)

9. Imputation

I believe that people are sinful, and therefore unrighteous in our standing before God. We cannot make ourselves righteous, and must rely on God to impute the righteousness of Christ to us; it is because of Christ that we are declared righteous.

(Romans 4:17-25)

10. Forgiveness

I believe our sins have been forgiven by God when we have genuinely repented and placed our faith and trust in Christ. When we are forgiven, we are no longer responsible for paying the penalty for our sinfulness, which is death.

(Ephesians 1:5-8)

11. Sanctification

I believe sanctification is that process of being conformed daily to the image of Christ; it is the initial step of being set apart from the world, and for God, and the ongoing process of being further set apart each day.

(Ephesians 5:26, John 17:17)

12. Spirit Baptism

I believe we are baptized in the Spirit of God at the time of salvation; we die to our old spirit, which is of the flesh, and become alive to the Holy Spirit.

(I Corinthians 12:12-14)

13. Eternal Security

I believe those who know Christ are eternally secure in Him, and that their salvation cannot be taken away, forfeited, or rejected, for it is not our own to lose. It is held by the power of God, who cannot let go, nor break His promise to grant eternal life.

(Romans. 8:1, John 10:28-29, I Peter 1:35)

14. Apostasy

I believe God has made it clear that we are to live by His word, which should be accurately read, understood, and applied to our lives. Apostasy is a perversion of the correct understanding of scripture, formulated to deceive and persuade people to turn from God, rather than embrace the truth and live a Godly, separated life.

(Galatians 1:6-9)

15. Glorification

I believe we will be glorified by God when we are with Him, seeing Him as He is, and sharing in His own glory, because we are partakers of His own inheritance. Our glorification will include the removal of the curse of sinfulness from our bodies, minds, and hearts, allowing us to share fully in a state of glorification in Heaven.

(Romans 8:16-1)

Eschatology

1. Order of Events

I believe that the church will be taken out of this world before a seven year tribulation period begins. Jesus will call us to meet Him in the air with the sound of a trumpet. A great and powerful man will soon come to world prominence and unite all nations with lies. He will exalt himself as God and be worshiped by many. Three and a half years into this seven year period much terrible judgment will come to the earth as a result of sin. When the judgment is ended, Christ will return with His saints to destroy the wicked and bind Satan. This war will be followed by a thousand years of peace with the reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. Following this peaceful reign, Satan will be loosed, and soon destroyed by fire. The dead will then stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment, where those who are not found written in the book of life will be cast into the Lake of Fire, and those found written in the Book of Life will be blessed with the privilege of dwelling with Christ for eternity in a new Heaven and new earth.

(John 14:1-3, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, II Thessalonians 2:1-12, Revelation 4-21)

Ecclesiology

1. The Local Church

I believe a church is a baptized congregation of true believers in Jesus Christ.
(Acts 2:41-47)

2. Scriptural Offices

I believe the church has two offices: Pastor and Deacon.
(Titus 1:5-9, I Timothy 3:1-13, Acts 6:1-7)

3. Mission of the Local Church

I believe the church is entrusted with the Great Commission that Jesus Christ gave which included preaching the gospel, teaching all that He commanded, and baptizing. The church is also responsible for sending missionaries that will evangelize, disciple, and begin new local churches.
(Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 13:1-3, 14:31-23, 26-27)

4. The Gospel

I believe the gospel is defined in I Corinthians 15:1-4, in that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day.

5. Local Church Ordinances

I believe the church has two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper/Communion.
(Matthew 28:18-20, I Corinthians 11:23-30)

6. Local Church Membership

I believe people should be welcomed into the church on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, belief in the doctrines of the assembly, current obedient walk with Him, and scriptural baptism.
(Acts 2:41-47)

7. Local Church Government

I believe a Pastor or Pastors (sometimes called Bishops/Overseers/Elders) should be the spiritual leaders of a congregation, Deacons should be servants, and each member should participate by using their spiritual gifts for the edification of the body. All members are to be accountable to the Pastors, and the Pastors are to be accountable to the church as a whole. We see in Acts 6, that Deacons were chosen by the agreement of the "whole multitude," and I believe many other business decisions should be made by congregational vote.
(Acts 6:1-7)

8. Associations, Conventions and Councils

I believe no outside organization should be directly involved in authorizing, legitimizing, sponsoring, or dictating what any individual church stands for, allows, or decides. Any association a church has with another organization should be for the purpose of fellowship in the truth alone. Authorities should not be set up outside the local assembly to determine the beliefs or behavior of that assembly.

9. Authority

I believe Christ is the head of the church. I believe the Bible should be the final authority for the church on matters of faith and practice.

(II Timothy 3:16)

10. Relation to the State

I believe that members of the church should individually submit themselves to the ordinances of man as long as those ordinances do not directly contradict the teaching of scripture. The local church as should not make choices based on the dictates of the government, nor should it answer to it as an authority on matters of faith and practice. The government of the church and the government of the state should be strictly separate.

(I Peter 2:13-17)

Separation

1. Personal

I believe a person should be separate from the characteristics, attitudes, and actions of the world. We should also be careful not to align ourselves with error, false teachings, consistently disobedient Christians, or causes that undermine the teaching of scripture.

(II Corinthians 6:14-17, II John)

2. Ecclesiastical

I believe a church should separate itself from the world, by basing its ministry solely upon the dictates of scripture. It should defend against a diminished witness by remaining separate from entities, causes, and believers that encourage perverse doctrine, disobedience, or worldly thinking.

(Ephesians 5:24-27)

Baptist Distinctives

I believe the Baptist Distinctives include, but are not limited to: Biblical authority, autonomy of the local church, priesthood of the believer, obedience to the two ordinances, individual soul liberty, saved and baptized church membership, adherence to the two offices, separation of church and state, and personal and ecclesiastical separation.

Personal Convictions

1. Bible Translations

I generally use the King James Version for preaching and teaching. This is not due to any belief in the superiority of its preservation or translation. I read and refer to several other versions in personal study and preparation for teaching.

2. Church Music

I believe Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are permissible and beneficial for use in church ministry. Music that is influenced by worldliness or crafted to appeal to the flesh should not be used. I take a generally conservative, traditional approach to all personal and ministry-related music selection.
(Colossians 3:16, I John 2:15)