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DEVELOPING AND TEACHING AN ADULT CURRICULUM ON
THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE, HIGHLAND BAPTIST
CHURCH, TULLAHOMA, TENNESSEE

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Stephen Matthew Keene

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DEVELOPING AND TEACHING AN ADULT CURRICULUM ON
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Stephen Matthew Keene

Read and Approved by:

Anthony W. Foster (Faculty Supervisor)

John David Trentham

Date _____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
PREFACE	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Goals	1
Ministry Context	2
Rationale for the Project	4
Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations	5
Research Methodology	6
2. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	10
Mark 12:29-31	10
Romans 12:2	19
Second Timothy 3:16-17	25
3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATION OF KNOWING DOCTRINE	33
Doctrine Increases Trust and Worship	37
Doctrine Aids in Knowing God's Will	39
Doctrine Increases Love for God	40
Doctrine Synthesizes Biblical Teaching	43
Doctrine and Evangelism	50
Doctrine and Teaching	53

Chapter	Page
4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	58
Introduction to the Series	58
Teaching Sessions	59
Concluding Meeting of the Series	76
5. CONCLUSION	78
Evidence of Findings	78
Evaluation of the Project's Purpose	90
Evaluation of the Project's Goals	93
Strengths of the Project	96
Weaknesses of the Project	98
What I Would Have Done Differently	100
Theological Reflections	103
Personal Reflections	108
Conclusion	112
 Appendix	
1. PRE-SERIES AND POST-SERIES SURVEY ON <i>THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE</i>	116
2. SURVEY RESULTS	127
3. EXPERT PANEL CURRICULUM EVALUATION	140
4. <i>THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE</i> TEACHER'S CURRICULUM	143
5. <i>THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE</i> STUDENT WORKBOOK	186
6. <i>THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE: A STATEMENT ADOPTED</i> BY THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, JUNE 14, 2000	278
BIBLIOGRAPHY	287

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
A1. Pre-series survey results	127
A2. Post-series survey results	131
A3. <i>t</i> -test for dependent samples/final results	135

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 1-25	87
2. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 26-40	88
3. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 41-55	88
4. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 56-70	89
5. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 71-85	89
6. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 86-105	90

PREFACE

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you for your grace and unending love. Thank you for the privilege it is to attempt to “know and understand” you. May Your heart delight in my efforts.

Lorie, you are by far the best woman I know or could comprehend knowing. Thank you for being my wife and my best friend. There is no way I can understand my life, work, and ministry apart from you. Not only did I complete this project *for* you, but I completed this project *because* of you! Next to Jesus Christ, you are the most cherished prize of my life!

Elijah and Emma, you are my most undeserved gifts. I love you more than I can find a way to say to you. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of being your dad.

To my dad, who is my unending source of encouragement, who always allowed me to be who I am and pursue my desires, whatever they may have been. To my mother, to whom I can honestly say I would not have made it this far without. I am more grateful than I can articulate. Your pen has written more on my heart than on my papers. To Craig, you are by far the best man I know. I cannot express how grateful I am for you and your example to me. I am extremely thankful for the ways in which you contributed to this project’s success.

To Grandma and Papa, thank you for all you have been to me over my lifetime and the course of my seminary education, and for the example you have set before me. If I am indebted to anyone outside Christ for showing me the love of God, your witnesses are debts in which I could never repay. I feel privileged, not only to know you as people, but for the honor of having you as my grandparents. I could not have done it without you!

To my professors in all arenas of higher education, I cannot overstate your

influence over me. You were not only my teachers, but my guides, and the gold-standard by which I have measured Christ-likeness outside the members of my family. Thank you to Dr. William Mason, Dr. Larry Purcell, Dr. Brian Vickers, and Dr. Bruce Ware. You have, no doubt, shaped me into who I am today. A special thank you to Dr. Michael Wilder for your encouragement and kindness over the years. You have inspired me more than you realize. Finally, to Dr. Anthony Foster, thank you for being a stellar mentor, a kind, gracious, patient guide, and a person whose life I wish to emulate in the years to come. Your Christ-like example, both academically and personally, is one which I can only hope to match granted my very best effort.

Finally, to Highland Baptist Church, thank you for the wonderful church family you are to myself, Lorie, Elijah, and Emma. I love you and feel privileged to serve and work with you in the cause of “knowing and understanding” our King.

Stephen Keene

Tullahoma, Tennessee

May 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and teach a thirteen-week curriculum on *The Baptist Faith and Message* among a core group of adults at Highland Baptist Church, Tullahoma, Tennessee.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to assess members' current understanding of Southern Baptist doctrines in the 2000 version of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. This assessment indicated what areas members understood well and areas which needed the strongest emphasis in teaching. This goal was measured by a questionnaire that surveyed participants' knowledge of *The Baptist Faith and Message*.¹ The goal was deemed successful when 20 participants completed the pre-series survey and the data was analyzed providing a clear understanding of the current knowledge. Based on the average attendance of 150-200 people on Sunday morning worship at Highland Baptist Church, 20 participants would have provided a sufficient sample for the study.

The second goal of this project was to develop a thirteen-week curriculum on the doctrinal tenets presented in *The Baptist Faith and Message*. While curriculum on the *The Baptist Faith and Message* currently exists, I developed curriculum tailored to the perceived needs of the congregation. This goal was measured by a curriculum evaluation rubric. An expert panel, composed of three members who have attained at least a master's level degree from a Southern Baptist theological seminary, assessed the theological

¹See appendix 1, Pre-Series and Post-Series Survey.

accuracy, consistency with Baptist belief and educational credibility, using the rubric. The goal was deemed successful when the evaluation yields 95 percent of the review components at sufficient or above levels.²

The third goal of this project was to increase knowledge of participants through teaching a thirteen week study to a core group of adults using the aforementioned curriculum on *The Baptist Faith and Message*. This goal was measured by a pre-series survey that was administered during the first session and a post-series survey during the last session. An average of 40 members attended each session. To ensure all participants received the full amount of information, a video recording of each session was available to the participants for anyone who missed session. The goal was deemed successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-series scores.

Ministry Context

The ministry context of Highland Baptist Church is one which was under liberal/moderate theological teaching and preaching for twenty years. The pastor was formally trained under the liberal era of Southern Seminary. The church experienced two decades of teaching which affirmed neither the inerrancy or infallibility of Scripture.

In the 1990s, as the Southern Baptist Convention and its churches officially returned to more orthodox and conservative doctrinal positions, the pastor seemed to become increasingly dissatisfied with the direction of the Convention. The pastor did not move to other areas of ministry, even while knowing his beliefs were incompatible with the beliefs of the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as the majority of its churches and the individuals which comprised the SBC after the conservative resurgence. Instead, he was sympathetic to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's doctrinal positions and attempted to move the church in that direction. The church rejected this attempt and

²See appendix 2, Expert Panel Curriculum Evaluation.

remained affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and its doctrinal positions. After the rejection of the efforts to move the church toward a more liberal/moderate denomination, the senior pastor retired.

After his retirement, Highland Baptist Church was without a senior pastor for three years. The church's pulpit was supplied by a more conservative interim pastor as the search began for a pastor more aligned with traditional, orthodox Southern Baptist doctrinal stances.

Even though many members of the church would not have identified themselves as liberal, some eventually left the church because of the desire to move toward more conservative leadership. Many felt the church had to move in a conservative direction because many sermons were presented devoid of scriptural reference. According to some members, the pastor would preach on an article or book he had read.

Even members with a traditional conservative understanding of the Scriptures were compelled to listen to teaching which they believed did not reflect the truth of Scripture and of Christ. Therefore, they demanded and longed for conservative biblically-based sermons.

Three years after the retirement of the former senior pastor, Highland hired a senior pastor, as well as myself in the role of minister of youth and education, who held conservative doctrinal stances, traditional, orthodox understandings of the Scriptures, and who held without reservation to the doctrinal position of *The Baptist Faith and Message* of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The doctrines of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, while not explicitly denied by the church body, were not necessarily taught nor affirmed by the former senior church leadership from a conservative theological paradigm. If one were to ask the church body, undoubtedly many would affirm most, if not all, of the core tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, such as the nature of God, the role of Christ, and the nature of the

Scriptures. Even though many members would affirm these core doctrines, they may have difficulty defending, or giving scriptural evidence, for why they believe them.

However, the more rarely discussed aspects of *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Articles IX-XVIII) might be unknown by the church body. Articles which deal with matters such as eschatology, stances on education, the Christian and social order, and the document's asserted views on family and war were not discussed often, if at all, under the previous pastor. If members at Highland were taught these doctrines, they were not taught with a correct biblical foundation.

Because Highland is a Southern Baptist church, I found it necessary for members of the church to understand who the church is from a denominational standpoint, as well as inform members on issues and beliefs they may have known to be true, but had difficulty articulating. There was not a system in place for training church members in Southern Baptist beliefs/doctrines. I felt this project was warranted to give members of Highland Baptist Church a firm conception of Southern Baptist identity and of what Southern Baptists believe.

Rationale for the Project

Due to the lack of conservative doctrinal preaching, teaching, and instruction for over two decades, members at Highland Baptist Church needed training in the tenets of traditional, orthodox beliefs according to *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The reason the core tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message* needed to be taught was to give adults a firm, biblically-based understanding, not only of the Baptist faith, but of the God in whom they worship on a weekly basis.

This lack of teaching left members of Highland in deep need of concentrated, biblical instruction on the tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Instruction on this document provided members a better understanding of God, the mission and work of Christ, the Scriptures, and how one should relate to *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

Adults who attended the instruction on *The Baptist Faith and Message*

achieved three objectives, they (1) gained the capacity to articulate what Southern Baptists believe according to *The Baptist Faith and Message* and give a scriptural apologetic for these beliefs; (2) were exposed to certain Southern Baptist doctrines they may have never heard or considered; and (3) demonstrated a more thorough knowledge of the Southern Baptist Convention's doctrinal tenets discussed in *The Baptist Faith and Message* through a post-series survey. By accomplishing these goals, I hoped those in attendance were brought closer to the Lord through a better understanding of the nature of His Word, His Son, His Church and how the church is to properly function.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

A definition of *The Baptist Faith and Message* is helpful to this project, as well as an explanation of limitations and delimitations.

The Baptist Faith and Message. The most recent version of *The Baptist Faith and Message* was published in 2000 by The Southern Baptist Convention, which states and biblically grounds eighteen core doctrinal tenets upon which all Southern Baptists should agree.³ These eighteen core truths are in reference to God, Jesus, Scripture, the church and the church's engagement with the world.

There were three significant limitations to this project. The first limitation was the fifteen-week length of study. Participants were engaged the first week by taking the pre-series survey, the subsequent thirteen weeks encompassed the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*, then a final week concluded with a post-series survey and wrap-up. Not every doctrinal tenet of *The Baptist Faith and Message* received a full session devoted to its examination. The second limitation was the educational level of each participant. As each person has differing abilities to process information, reading comprehension and educational training, the study was limited by the individual's ability

³The Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2000).

to absorb and process the material. Participants were required to attend all sessions. If a participant did not attend a session, a video of the session was made available for their use.

The third limiting factor was the evaluation and approval of the curriculum by the senior pastor and deacon body at Highland Baptist Church, as well as an expert panel.

The scope of this project was limited in four ways: (1) each doctrine was not covered exhaustively; (2) due to the ample amount of scriptural support for each doctrinal tenet, *The Baptist Faith and Message* was not read and examined for each individual passage per tenet; (3) the participants were eighteen years of age or older; and (4) the series was limited to those in attendance for all sessions or who watched every required session video.

Research Methodology

Developing and teaching a thirteen-week curriculum on *The Baptist Faith and Message* among a core group of adults at Highland Baptist Church in Tullahoma, Tennessee, entailed the fulfillment of the goals previously mentioned. I promoted the series about three months in advance and participants in the series were those individuals who displayed an interest by registering for the series.

The first goal of this project assessed adults' current understanding of Southern Baptist doctrines in *The Baptist Faith and Message*. While promotion of the series began three months in advance in worship, and information placed in all church literature regarding the location, time, length and topic of discussion, the enlistment of participants began one month prior to the teaching series. Members were directed to sign up for the teaching series. During the first week of the project, 43 participants signed up for the series and completed the pre-series survey. One of the goals of the project was that there would be a difference in the pre-series and post-series scores. Only church members who committed to being present for the entire thirteen-week series were allowed to take the survey. By use of this survey, I provided information regarding each participant's level of

understanding of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. To provide members with anonymity, the participants used a code word to identify themselves. I encouraged participants to use a code word easy to remember at the end of the series. To ensure codes were not permanently lost, I asked the participants to write their name and code word on master list, in the event their code word is forgotten when they took their post-series survey. This master list remained in a sealed envelope unless a participant could not remember their code word during the post-series survey. I did not look at the contents of the list, but only the participant who may have forgotten their code.

Members of this group increased in their knowledge of Scripture and of Baptist doctrine through a twelve-week series of lessons on the doctrinal tenets outlined in *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain not only what areas participants lacked in their doctrinal understanding, but also areas in which they understood well. At the end of the survey, I had a good sense of what each participant did and did not comprehend about Baptist doctrine. The survey consisted of questions regarding each of the doctrinal issues in *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

During the final week of the ministry project, a post-series survey was given to each participant to measure their knowledge of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The post-series survey was completed by a minimum of 20 people who attended all of sessions and previously completed the pre-series survey at the beginning of the project. A recording of each session was made available for participants who missed sessions. The video provided all teaching and question and answer time as if the absent participant was in the session. During the first session, all participants were notified that 100 percent attendance was mandatory. Participants were expected to make an appointment with me to receive a copy of the session missed should they be unable to attend a session. Providing each session through video guaranteed all participants had access to all sessions during the series.

A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine the project's success:

The common-use definition or description of *t* tests is simply comparing two means to see if they are significantly different from each other. The more technical definition or description of a *t* test is any statistical test that uses the *t*, or Student's *t*, family of distributions.⁴

A t-test was necessary to measure the participants' ability to answer questions more accurately based on pre- and post-series answers of those who attended the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The goal was deemed successfully met if the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-series scores.

The second goal of this project was to develop a twelve-week curriculum on the doctrinal tenets presented in *The Baptist Faith and Message*. As noted, previous works on *The Baptist Faith and Message* currently exist, however, the rationale for developing a new curriculum was based on the perceived needs of the ministry context. Each week I taught the curriculum to at least 20 members who are over 18 years of age at Highland Baptist Church. Each member of the group attended every session, learned the material presented, and had time for comments and questions. At the conclusion of each session, I directed the group to carefully read the next week's doctrinal tenet daily, as well as all relevant Scripture for the doctrinal tenet outlined in *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Participants were highly encouraged to take notes during the series as well as bring questions from their assigned reading to each class.

The curriculum was refined based on the results of the evaluation rubric given to the expert panel. The expert panel was comprised of individuals who are academically qualified to evaluate the curriculum in three distinct ways: theological accuracy, conformity to Southern Baptist doctrine, and curriculum development. Each member of the expert panel had a minimum of a master's degree in the area in which they evaluated. The goal was deemed successful when the evaluation yielded 95 percent of the review components at sufficient or above levels, as well as being approved by members of the expert panel.

⁴Timothy C. Urda, *Statistics in Plain English*, 3rd ed. (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 93.

The third goal of this project was to increase knowledge of participants through teaching a thirteen-week study to a core group of adult members using the aforementioned curriculum on *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Using the curriculum I developed, which was approved by the expert panel, senior pastor, and deacons at Highland Baptist Church, I taught a thirteen-week series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* using the aforementioned format.

At the conclusion of the project, I presented the group with a post-series survey which was identical to the pre-series survey. I used a t-test for dependent samples in order to demonstrate a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-series scores.⁵

⁵All research instruments were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter examines the thesis that God calls every believer to understand the doctrine contained in Scripture. This thesis is defended by three primary scriptural references, Mark 12:29-31, Romans 12:2 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17, as well as other theological texts.

Mark 12:29-31

John Olivi points out that Christ “sets forth the two principal commandments for meriting and obtaining the kingdom of God where the text states: ‘And one of the scribes came forward.’”¹ This passage quotes Christ’s response to scribes who questioned Jesus after he heard them “disputing with one another.” The scribe seems to pose his question because “being an expounder of the Law, he is offended at the doctrine of the gospel, by which he supposes the authority of Moses to be diminished.”² However, after witnessing Jesus’ skill in answering difficult theological questions, the scribe posed a question to Jesus regarding which command from the Old Testament was primary, or “the most important of them all.”

Verse 29 records Christ’s response as beginning with a quotation of Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Interestingly, Jesus began His response with Deuteronomy 6:4 instead of Deuteronomy 6:5. By

¹John Olivi, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2001), 48-49.

²John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 56.

quoting Deuteronomy 6:4, Jesus implicitly emphasizes the necessity of understanding verse 4 before one is able to fully understand “which commandment is the most important of all.” “Jesus gives the introduction to the ten commandments as the first command itself, not in so far as it forms one of the commandments, but in so far as it is the principle of the commandments—finding its full exposition in the words: And thou shalt love, etc.”³

Jesus does not immediately offer the hearers, nor the later readers of the Gospel of Mark, what is traditionally thought as the “most important commandment of all” in verse 29. Instead, Jesus emphasizes two doctrinal statements which are foundational and offer distinct doctrinal truths about the Godhead.

The first doctrinal statement Jesus emphasizes in verse 29 is the Lord being God. Moses and Christ emphatically note Yahweh as supreme over all the created order. The Lord being “God” indicates an unrivaled, unparalleled, unmatched sovereign rule over the entire universe.

The second doctrinal statement Jesus emphasizes in verse 29 is the Lord being one. Eugene Boring writes, “There is a connection between monotheism and undivided love for God. If there are competing gods, the devotee cannot afford to give total devotion to any one of them.”⁴

The affirmation of God being one may be an obvious, rudimentary doctrinal assertion in modern, conservative Western churches; however, this doctrinal truth is foundational for a proper understanding of the nature of God. Jesus’ clarification regarding the Lord being one is vital and necessary in both contexts of Deuteronomy and Mark due to influence of the polytheistic cultures in which these verse books occur, with a polytheistic

³John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, and William G. T. Shedd, *Mark: A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008). 122.

⁴Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 344.

Egyptian religious culture in Deuteronomy and a Roman polytheistic religious culture in Mark. Ezra Gould writes, “This unity has for its conclusion, that worship is not to be divided among several deities, but concentrated on one.”⁵ By asserting the Lord is one, Jesus provides a basis for both the hearer and reader by framing his statements exclusively within the context of the God found in the Old Testament and revealed in Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, the means by which individuals are exposed to the truth of the Lord being one is through the experience of hearing. In verse 29, Christ quotes Deuteronomy 6:4 in its entirety, beginning with a commandment to “hear.” It is primarily through the teaching and experiencing of God’s Word by proclamation that doctrinal understanding occurs. The experience of hearing or exposure to teachings such as “the Lord our God, the Lord is one,” is a call to understand specific doctrinal statements about the nature of God. This foundational doctrinal assertion is helpful in order to provide a guiding doctrine around which all other commands and doctrines revolve. Larry Hurato explains,

Since it was commonly understood that the OT Law included 613 commandments, it is understandable that there was a desire to try to organize this body of material around a basic commandment so as to give a fundamental premise on which to hand all the individual commands.⁶

Lastly, for a proper understanding of this verse, a remark on Mark’s use of tense is necessary. Both Moses and Jesus affirm “the Lord is one.” The current, immutable reality of God in both time⁷ and space⁸ is necessary and essential for a proper

⁵Ezra Gould, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 232.

⁶Larry Hurato, *Mark*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 189.

⁷Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 235-67.

⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 174-75.

understanding of God.⁹ Herman Bavick writes, “The doctrine of God’s immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature.”¹⁰ The immutable, steadfast nature of God’s existence, in both number and essence, is one of the paramount, foundational truths conveyed in both locations of this passage.

The question posed by the scribes required a seemingly straight-forward, direct response. Jesus offers a direct response, however, not in the manner the scribes expected. The reader of Mark’s gospel can notice Jesus’ response to the scribes’ question as beginning with the command to “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.” Jesus responds that the most important command is essentially to hear, recognize, and understand the Lord is God and He is one.

In Mark 12:30, Christ qualifies how hearing, recognizing, and understanding God is accomplished by restating Deuteronomy 6:5. Mark states, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” As in Deuteronomy 6:5, Mark 12:30 appears to offer the hearer and reader the means and methods of how to approach the task of hearing, recognizing, and understanding the Lord God, who is one.

In Deuteronomy 6:5, the Israelites are commanded to love God with all their heart, soul, and might, which in the Mark passage is understood as “strength.” However, in Mark 12:30, the aspect of loving God with all one’s mind is added to the items quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5. Robert Stein asserts,

The Matthean parallel (22:37) contains the first three elements in the same order, but lacks “strength.” Luke (10:27) contains all four elements, but the order of the last two is reversed. All three accounts agree against the MT and targumic texts, which lack “mind.” The LXX texts are mixed. Some have “heart” but not “mind,”

⁹Ibid., 163.

¹⁰Herman Bavick, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. William Hendrickson (1951, repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 149.

and some “mind” but not “heart.” No LXX MS of this passage appears to have both.¹¹

From the Deuteronomy passage, Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum write,

In Mark and Luke “mind” is added and nothing is omitted—four things are mentioned. . . . The reason for this is that the Greek work *kardia* (heart) does not sufficiently convey to the audience of the first century the fact that reasoning and thinking are included in the functions of the heart in Hebrew.¹²

Jesus does not clarify why the addition of “mind” was added to the Deuteronomy passage quoted in Mark 12:30. However, the emphasis is clear: God calls every believer to understand the doctrine contained in Scripture. While the word “mind” does not occur in the Deuteronomical version, it should not be taken to suggest understanding doctrine was not valued in an Old Testament perspective, instead, it suggests a follower of Christ is called to use all their gifts and faculties, including one’s cognition, as a means of hearing and understanding that the Lord God is one.

In Mark 12:30, Jesus emphasizes the necessity of loving God with every aspect of one’s being. It is important to note the effect each item in Mark 12:30 has upon the whole person. If a believer is to love the Lord God with all his heart, a basic cognitive understanding of the doctrinal truths of God must be present. A basic cognitive understanding granted by the Holy Spirit, of the God revealed in Scripture, is the primary driving force behind this task. It would prove difficult to love something or someone with all one’s heart without a rudimentary understanding of the object of that particular affection.

Furthermore, Christ affirms all the means by which believers are to love God in Mark 12:30. All actions commanded in Deuteronomy 6:5, such as loving God with all one’s heart, soul and strength, remain undiminished in Mark 12:30. Thomas Schreiner

¹¹Robert Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 561.

¹²Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 369.

explains, “Since God is supreme, it follows that loving God with all of one’s being and strength is elevated as the most important command in the Scriptures. This command, of course, finds its roots in the Shema.”¹³ Christ’s command to love the Lord God by use of cognitive abilities serves to bolster and firmly root the command to love God in every aspect of the believer’s life in the New Testament context. In this passage, as well as others, Jesus “presents himself as the eschatological goal of the OT, and thereby its sole authoritative interpreter, the one through whom alone the OT finds its valid continuity and significance.”¹⁴

Having a cognitive understanding of doctrine is not simply a suggestion offered as a means of further growth in discipleship post-salvation. Instead, Christ commands a basic cognitive understanding of the Lord God as one as indispensable for truly having a relationship with Him. One may grow in this understanding of the Lord God by following the command to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

When Christ was asked by the scribes to provide the single most important commandment in the Law, the answer was given in the form of a quote from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, with the addition to love the Lord with all one’s “mind” in Mark 12:29. However, Christ gives further information regarding the most important commandment in the Law. Jesus offers the second greatest commandment in the Law in verse 30: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The second greatest commandment in the Law is a quotation of Leviticus 19:18.

This second quotation from the Law “uniquely expressed Christian concern and could hardly be offensive to anyone. The concluding statement in Mark, that there is no other commandments greater than these, is the affirmation of early Gentile

¹³Thomas Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 127.

¹⁴D. A. Carson, *Mark*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 144.

Christianity.”¹⁵ The Israelites are commanded in Leviticus 19:18 to “not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” By quoting Leviticus 19:18 in Mark 12:31, Jesus intricately arranges how believers’ doctrinal understanding not only effects their relationship with the Lord, but also directly informs their treatment and relationship with other people. Both passages impress upon believers how a proper understanding of doctrine provides believers with a proper view of God, which also provides the framework for proper relationships between people.

Leviticus 19:18 provides the reader with two commands which they are to follow if they are to be followers of God. The first command to the Israelites is couched in the negative “shall not:” the Israelites, “shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the son of your own people.” This first command restrains the offended party from enacting retribution upon the offender. The second command, stated in the positive, commands the offended party that they “shall love their neighbor.” Furthermore, the meaning of Leviticus 19:18 can mean “to provide assistance” or “be useful” to one’s neighbor.¹⁶ While the first commandment in verse 18 restrains the believer, the second commandment frees the neighbor to love.

However, love, as commanded in Leviticus 19:18, is not love in the general sense. The context for love in the Leviticus 19:18 is to love one’s neighbor “as yourself.” Schreiner writes,

The OT law does not stand on its own and must be read in light of the story line of Scripture, which finds its climax in Jesus Christ. The message of the OT law was summarized from the OT texts well known to every Jewish person. People must

¹⁵Howard Kee and Charles Laymon, *The Gospels: A Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke, John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 158.

¹⁶A. Malamat, ““You Shall Love Your Neighbour as Yourself”: A Case for Misinterpretation,” in *Die Herbredische Bibel und hire zweifache Nachgeschircte: Festschrift fur Rolf Rendtorfff sum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. E. Blum, C. Macholz, and E. W. Stagemen (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchner, 1990), 111-15.

love the Lord with all of their beings and love their neighbors as themselves.¹⁷

These commands are of more importance than sacrifices and offerings. God commands believers to treat offenders in the same way believers would desire to be treated if they had been the offender. This context provides the doctrinal framework for how God through Christ loves the church. Through Christ, God loves the world by the sacrificial death on the cross. Fulfilling the doctrine found in Leviticus 19:18 takes the form of love by restraining one's vengeance, as well as loving one's neighbor "as yourself."

Examining Jesus' quote of Leviticus 19:18, it is curious as to why Jesus did not quote the full Leviticus 19:18 passage when giving the second most important commandment in the Law. However, from the context of the previously quoted Deuteronomy passage, it is understood in Mark 12:31 that if believers follow the first command to love the Lord with all their "heart, soul, mind and strength," as well as their neighbor "as themselves," they will not take vengeance upon, or bear "grudges against the sons of their own people," or their neighbors.

Furthermore, Jesus widens the scope of the Leviticus passage from restraining the Israelites of taking vengeance upon and bearing grudges "against the sons of their own people," to quoting the more general statement in Leviticus 19:18 to "love your neighbor as yourself." Christ is implying that exacting vengeance, as well as bearing grudges, is not only negative if done "against the sons of your own people," but is also negative if done toward one's neighbor.

Christ did not seem satisfied with leaving the answer to the most important commandment in the Law by commanding believers to "hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Christ also provided the grid by which believers are to approach this task of hearing and understanding the Lord God who is one. Believers are to "love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength." Christ does not suggest inward personal sanctification as the endpoint of Christian doctrinal understanding. Christ also

¹⁷Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 622.

commands if one is to truly understand God they must display a practical, active understanding of doctrine by loving one's neighbor as themselves. Doctrinally, these two commands are intertwined. These teachings "could not but hasten the Christian abandonment of the ritual elements of the Torah."¹⁸ John Calvin and William Pringle write,

They all agree in this, that the scribe put a question for the sake of tempting Christ; but he who is described by Matthew and Mark goes away with no bad disposition; for he acquiesces in Christ's reply, and shows a sign of a teachable and gentle mind: to which must be added, that Christ, on the other hand, declares that *he is not far from the kingdom of God.*¹⁹

The scribes affirmed Christ's assertion of "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" as correct in verse 32, by stating, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one and there is no other beside him." Terence Keegan explains that this "passage is unique among the pronouncement stories in Mark. Here we have a dialogue in which Jesus agrees with and praises the attitude of the one questioning him."²⁰

In verses 32-33, the scribes affirmed the words Christ spoke regarding the greatest command, as well as the second greatest command to love one's neighbor "as yourself." The scribes were not simply affirming kind or sentimental words regarding piety or ethical behavior toward other human beings. They were affirming doctrinal statements of belief about the nature of God, how that particular understanding influences and motivates believers toward holiness, and the means by which God works in believers. Furthermore, it is only after this affirmation of doctrine by the scribes which Jesus informs them in verse 34, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." France explains,

The mutual congratulation lends a quite new atmosphere to this latest encounter.

¹⁸R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 478.

¹⁹Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, 55.

²⁰Terence Keegan, *A Commentary of the Gospel of Mark* (New York: Paulist, 1981), 153.

Together with the information that thereafter no one dared ask any more questions, and the fact that the next question is posed not to Jesus but by him (and is left unanswered), and Mark's way of narrating this episode, suggests that in the contest which has been taking place since 11:27 it is Jesus who is now emerging the clear winner.²¹

Jesus may have not been using the Law only to win an argument or show the religious leaders how incorrect their theology may have been. Hurato writes,

The point of this passage seems to be to show that Jesus' criticism of scribal tradition did not amount to a rejection of the validity of the OT Law as revelation of God. Rather, Jesus' reply to the scribe in 12:29-31 is intended to show what Jesus saw the proper point of the Law to be.²²

By examining Mark 12:29-31, it is clear God calls every believer to understand the doctrine contained in Scripture.

While Mark 12:29-31 unifies the Old and New Testaments in calling believers to know and understand doctrine, an examination of Romans 12:2 supports the thesis by examining Paul's exhortation to be "transformed by the renewal of your mind." When believers know doctrine, they are able to "discern what is the will of God, what is good acceptable and perfect." This passage supports the thesis in that persons who are doctrinally sound are better able to live as biblical believers.

Romans 12:2

Paul encourages the church in Romans 12:2 by offering two commandments. The first commandment demands believers "do not be conformed to this world." Thomas Schreiner writes,

Paul is not merely concerned that believers will outwardly conform to this age. He is worried that their adaptation to this world will shape them in every dimension of their lives. It is instructive to note that he contrasts being conformed to "this age" with "the renewal of the mind."²³

The natural question is how one resists conforming to the world. Paul answers this

²¹France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 476.

²²Hurato, *Mark*, 189.

²³Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 646.

question with the second command: “But be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”

Paul could have used the word “heart” at the beginning of verse 2, but instead chose “mind.” When a change of life occurs in the believer, it is usually deemed a “heart” change. While “heart” change is certainly vital, Paul cites mental transformation as necessary for true Christian life change. Believers must be renewed completely, even in their thought processes. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones explains, “The ultimate objective in the incarnation was the production of a new humanity.”²⁴

Paul’s choice of tense in writing is important as well. The apostle places the refusal to be conformed to the world, as well as the reality of being transformed and renewed, as something happening in the moment. Paul does not specifically encourage believers to resist a future conforming to the world, nor does he encourage believers to reserve and apply their transformed, renewed mental facilities in a future situation. According to Paul, the ability to refuse being conformed, as well as living as transformed, renewed individuals, is a current reality.

The transforming mental renewal of which Paul is writing transforms one’s thinking to the mind of Christ. Believers are renewed in their minds by faith, and “only faith transforms the mind and leads us to where we may prove the will of God.”²⁵ Believers have the mind of Christ when they are thinking correctly about the nature of God, His church, Scripture, and how believers are to interact with creation. These are all doctrinal realities which must be understood cognitively on a basic level before practical application can be made.

By these two commandments, Paul encourages believers to shape new paradigms of thinking by resisting conforming for renewal and transformation. Paul calls

²⁴D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 12, Christian Conduct* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 115.

²⁵Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 152.

believers to the complete removal of old paradigms of thinking and replacing them with completely new paradigms of thinking. In a transformed mind “the old has passed away and behold all things have become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Consistent refusal to be conformed, as well as living with a transformed, renewed mind, is accomplished by one’s understanding of doctrine. To understand doctrine, one must renew the mind by rejecting doctrine contrary to the Word of God from taking root in the heart. Having a renewed mind is a vital component for having a renewed heart.

Simply stating one must have a renewed, transformed life does not inform the believer of what he is able to accomplish with this new mind. The doctrinal understanding which accompanies a renewed, transformed mind should be able to accomplish certain functions. In the latter half of Romans 12:2, Paul gives a short list of what tasks believers can accomplish with a doctrinally accurate mindset.

Once a believer has been transformed by a renewed mind, Paul mentions the believer is able to *test* and *discern*. However, this does not mean the ability to test and discern are fully developed when a person has a salvation experience. Wayne Grudem writes, “As with all spirituals gifts, it would seem that there are degrees of intensity or strength in the developments of this gift as well. So some may have this gift developed to a very high degree and others may find it functioning only occasionally.”²⁶ While unbelievers are able to test and discern aspects in their life, they are not able to do so with the mind of Christ. Unbelievers may have a general sense of right, wrong, good, evil, or decent behavior due to common grace, but the reality is on unbeliever’s ability to accurately understand, test, and discern these issues from the vantage of the mind of Christ is not present. Anders Nygren explains,

According to Paul, “renewing of the mind” also includes a new ethical judgment. The Christian has received the ability to prove what God’s will is in the concrete situation. He has received a new mind for God’s will, for that which is good and

²⁶Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 426.

acceptable and perfect. He no longer judges according to the manner and standard of this world. His aim is that God's will be done.²⁷

While the words *test* and *discern* may appear similar when casually read, they have different connotations for the believer. Testing is “a procedure, reaction, or reagent used to identify or characterize a substance or constituent,”²⁸ while discernment is “the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure.”²⁹ The act of testing measures what is objectively true. A believer is able test whether an activity is pleasing to the Lord by weighing it against such aspects as the commands found in Scripture that do and do not please the Lord. However, discernment is the ability of the believer, granted by the Holy Spirit, to weigh issues which may not be as objectively definable. For example, issues such as how believing parents are to appropriately discipline children, or what worship style is best for their local church context, are not objectively delineated in Scripture and are, therefore, matters for mature Christian discernment.

Paul commands renewed, transformed believers with the mind of Christ to both objectively test and perform the abstract function of discernment. The actions of testing and discerning are all done through the grid of proper doctrinal understanding. The believer both objectively tests and discerns desires, motivations, actions, and emotions against the truth of Scripture. If doctrinal understanding is removed from this process, neither testing nor discernment can take place.

Effects of the Ability to Discern Doctrine

Believers with renewed, transformed minds, who test and discern against solid doctrinal understandings, have the ability to accomplish certain tasks. Romans 12:2 says “by testing” the believer is able to “discern what is the will of God, what is good

²⁷Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg, 1949), 419-20.

²⁸Merriam-Webster, “Test,” accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/test?show=0&t=1389626703>

²⁹Ibid.

acceptable and perfect.” Paul lists four different results testing discerning believers in Christ with proper doctrinal understandings are able to accomplish.

First, a transformed believer with a renewed mind is able to test and discern the will of God. This aspect might be both objectively defined, as well as a matter of discernment. For example, the will of God might be objectively defined when a husband considers whether he should divorce his wife if he feels no longer in love with her. The will of God is objectively clear in Scripture regarding the husband: he should commit to serving and loving his wife unconditionally. However, a believing student soon to graduate high school may need discernment as to what may be the next step in their life. For this student, discovering God’s will for issues such as should one attend college, where one should attend college, should the student immediately enter the workforce, and which career should they choose, are issues for discernment in discovering the will of God.

Second, a transformed believer with a renewed mind is able to test and discern what is good. “Where the Greek word for ‘world’ is literally ‘age,’” the Christian with a renewed mind should think as citizens of heaven instead of earth, as well as “ought to have a set of priorities that are radically different from those of the world.”³⁰ One must not be conformed to the pattern of this world. A believer’s understanding of “good” must be strictly found in a doctrinally understanding of God being the ultimate good in the universe. Without God as the objective standard, the concept of “good” becomes relative and could be interpreted as whatever makes one happy. Having a doctrinal understanding of the nature and origins of “goodness” allows one to know “good” objectively, as well as have the ability to discern the good in an otherwise confusing situation.

Third, a transformed believer with a renewed mind is able to test and discern what is acceptable. To accept is to grant approval on a basic level. As in the previous examples, acceptance is both objectively ascertained, as well as a matter requiring

³⁰John Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 277.

discernment based on the context. Doctrine provides the presuppositional foundation by which believers know what to accept and reject. In many circumstances, this foundational understanding of doctrine provides an understanding of what is acceptable before one is confronted with an issue. For example, based on a doctrinal understanding of marriage, a believer should view cohabitation before marriage as unacceptable even before being in a relationship. From Scripture, one can objectively know this truth and use discernment as to whether they should be in a relationship with someone who espouses otherwise. “The transformation and shaping of the life of the Christian are determined not by external worldly forms, but by this inward renewing, or renewing ascending to the whole of the external life through the productive power of the Spirit.”³¹

Fourth, a transformed believer with a renewed mind is able to test and discern what is perfect. Paul’s admonition for the Romans is for those with a proper doctrinal understanding to refuse compromise by being conformed to the world. The believer is encouraged not only to seek what is good, or acceptable, but ultimately, what is perfect. Christ does not command believers to be transformed and renewed for the purpose of discovering what is *good enough* or *adequate*. God desires believers know doctrine so they can discover God’s perfect will.

As noted in previous examples, God provides the believer with a framework for understanding what is perfect by means of understanding the doctrine contained in Scripture. Believers are able to process the will of God when they understand doctrine correctly by the transformation and renewal of their mind. Ambrosiaster writes,

To serve God with the mind means to be conformed to spiritual things by the operation of righteousness, working out by the patience of the Spirit we have received what is pleasing to God and then doing those things, because that is the perfect goodness which God likes.³²

³¹John Peter Lange et al., *Romans*, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 382.

³²Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians*, trans. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 95.

Furthermore, believers are able to understand what is good, acceptable, and perfect when they understand doctrine correctly with transformed and renewed minds. Romans 12:2 reveals when believers know doctrine they are able to “discern what is the will of God, what is good acceptable and perfect.” From a scriptural perspective, it seems evident persons who are doctrinally sound are better able to live as biblical believers.

Second Timothy 3:16-17

This last section seeks to demonstrate how Paul exhorts Timothy to know and understand doctrine. Second Timothy 3:16-17 supports the thesis by showing the necessity of understanding doctrine for one’s growth as he matures in Christ. The believer must bear in mind the commands found in Scripture reveal certain doctrinal truths about God, Scripture, and Christian living. Paul writes in his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor he is mentoring, by stating, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul is not writing regarding his preference regarding Scripture. Paul does not merely *wish* Scripture to be God-breathed, inerrant, or infallible. Paul is making an objective statement about the nature of Scripture. Millard Erickson writes, “The impression here is that they are divinely produced, just as God breathed the breath of life into the human.”³³ It is not only a helpful *idea* for Scripture to be God-breathed, it is a doctrinal *truth*.

Paul does not want the reader to be confused about the amount of Scripture which is God-breathed: “*All* Scripture is breathed out by God.” Paul was intentional when using this phrase. He may have wanted to avoid a possible temptation by those in the early church who intended to hold only his writings and those of the apostles as authoritative. Paul swiftly ends any potential discussion on the issue of the Old

³³Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 227.

Testament's contents being God-breathed. Paul's claims not only are the writings of what would be known as the New Testament God-breathed, but also the Old Testament writings as well.

By affirming "all Scripture is breathed out by God," Paul may have also been addressing those who held to the canon of the Old Testament as inerrant and infallible, but yet did not want to accept the writings of Paul and the apostles as part of the existing canon. Paul may have wanted to avoid the temptation of the church to view his and the apostles' writings as less authoritative than Old Testament canon. Paul not only solidified all Scripture as God-breathed, but gave the doctrinal framework to the truth of biblical inerrancy and infallibility when it comes to the text of the New Testament.

Paul places all Scripture in a unique category of being "breathed out by God." While the mode by which God delivers content to the writers of the biblical text has been intensely debated, Paul does not address this issue in his writings. Thomas Lea and Griffin Hayne write, "In affirming the inspiration of Scripture, Paul declared the fact of inspiration without discussing the process by which inspiration took place."³⁴ Instead, Paul states whatever manner God delivered the content, through use of their personalities and/or writing style, it is clear from this passage God is the One who directed, guided, and communicated exactly what He intended to be written. All Scripture finds its origin in God and all Scripture emanates from God to man. As the passage in discussion makes plain, Scripture is "breathed out by God."

Doctrinally, the fact of Scripture is "breathed out by God" is a vital component that influences everything about Christian living, how people are to know Christ and His will for their lives. Through Scripture, Christians know about Christ and understand proper Christian conduct, as well as order and govern the church. For the Christian and the church, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, rooted in the reality of 2 Timothy 3: 16-17,

³⁴Thomas Lea and Griffin Hayne, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 236.

is essential and necessary.

The doctrine of all Scripture being “breathed out” by God is not only sufficient based on the extent of this passage examined thus far, but verse 16 lists ways in which the doctrine is beneficial in the life of the believer and the church.

The Profitability of Doctrine

Verse 16 states the Scripture, which is “breathed out by God,” is also “profitable.” To bring a profit means to benefit or grow. Having a correct doctrinal understanding “requires taking very seriously the task of interpretation, and making an intelligent, sensible effort to discover the precise message God wanted conveyed.”³⁵ If the doctrine of biblical inerrancy and infallibility of all Scripture is not the point Paul is attempting to make in verse 16, it would seem as if Paul’s claim of Scripture being of profit is either negated or greatly diminished. It would be difficult for Christians at any time in the history of the faith to claim that Scripture is of genuine profit and not God-breathed. This is not advocating if a text is not God-breathed in the scriptural sense, such as books theology texts or books on the topic of Christian livings are of no benefit to an individual’s growth in Christ. Granted, most texts written regarding Christianity and the Christian life are extra-biblical and prove themselves to be greatly beneficial and profitable to believers. However, the author is not using the term *profitable* in this context as referring to extra-biblical books which provide mere *insight* to the words of God in Scripture. The term *profitable* in this context refers to the unchangeable, immutable, inerrant, infallible words of God which are not subject to the kinds of judgments that extra-biblical writings may be subjected. As fantastic and scripturally-saturated other extra-biblical works may be, Scripture is the only rule for the Christian to derive ultimate instruction of behavior, law, conduct, and correct doctrine.

Believers must continue from understanding God’s Word to be the exclusive,

³⁵Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 244.

authoritative standard for profitability, to understanding how God's Word is profitable. Paul lists in verse 16 how Scripture is profitable. It is interesting how each item in Paul's list hinges on the doctrinal reality of understanding Scripture as God-breathed. If Scripture fails to be God-breathed, one might question whether Scripture is actually profitable for the items mentioned in verse 16.

The first item mentioned on Paul's list is Scripture is profitable for *teaching*. For believers to have a solid doctrinal understanding of God, they must be taught Scripture in a biblical, doctrinal manner. Teaching "ranks above all the rest; for it will be to no purpose that you exhort or reprove, if you have not previously instructed."³⁶

While it may be possible to read the Scripture and ascertain certain truths and understand the nature of God as an individual, it is primarily in the setting of a teacher/student, mentor/mentee relationship where most growth occurs. In reference to instilling biblical truth to children, parents are commanded in Deuteronomy 6:7, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." The process of teaching is necessary to the cognitive understanding of doctrine as one advances in sanctification. Individual piety and devotion are certainly important, but personal piety and devotion are not the exclusive means for growth as a believer. Those who desire to grow in Christ should place themselves in a teaching setting to hear Scripture taught on a consistent basis. The doctrine of biblical inerrancy and infallibility is the basis of why teaching God's Word is profitable for the believer.

Next, Paul lists *reproof* as an aspect of which a believer may profit from the reality of Scripture being "breathed out by God." While *reproof* and *correction* may seem similar when read casually, the two admonitions have different connotations which need to be examined. Reproof is the clear criticism of another based on an objective standard.

³⁶John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 250.

Stated succinctly, reproof is the accusation of failing to meet an objective standard. Reproof does not offer a solution or resolution, but instead gives the offender a clear indictment of guilt. While reproof may sound harsh, it is necessary for revealing sin and bringing offenders to repentance. If believers rely on the doctrinal statement of “all Scripture being breathed out by God,” they have a standard by which they can judge their personal actions and hold other believers accountable.

While *reproof* serves a needed, God-honoring purpose in a Christian’s sanctification, left by itself, it can have the potential to be difficult to accept and seem accusatory. Paul follows his statement of reproof by offering God’s Word as profitable for *correction*. Correction should always follow reproof. Reproof on its own only reveals sin and guilt. Correction, however, provides the one enduring reproof a means of understanding, processing, and dealing with exposed sin. Correction may be viewed as the action which attempts to remove the need for further reproof. Without being rooted in the doctrinal truth of God’s Word being God-breathed, it is difficult to ascertain what standard the offender is to be corrected toward. If God’s Word is not God-breathed, inerrant, and infallible, one does not have a clear, objective standard by which they may reorient their life. While inerrancy may have been “used interchangeably with infallibility,” it may be important to note the infallibility is used also in the “sense to mean that the Bible will not lead us astray in matters of faith and practice.”³⁷ At best, if the doctrine of inerrancy and infallibility is not affirmed, correction becomes merely advice toward a subjective personal morality. The Bible is not only inerrant and infallible exclusively in matters of “faith and practice,” but the “Bible repeatedly affirms that all of Scripture is profitable for us and that *all* of it is ‘God-breathed.’ Thus it is completely pure, perfect, and true. The Bible itself does not make any restriction on the kinds of subjects to which it speaks truthfully.”³⁸

³⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 93n2.

³⁸Ibid., 174-77.

The last item in Paul's list in verse 16 is God's Word being profitable for *training in righteousness*. Training in righteousness can be closely linked to the first item, teaching. While personal discipleship is paramount for believers wishing to grow in Christ, the process of being "trained for righteousness" is also necessary. When believers act in righteousness they align themselves with God's righteousness, "which means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right."³⁹ Believers are able to live God-honoring lives more effectively when they grow in their personal devotion to Christ, as well as trained externally by others who invest in their lives.

While "training for righteousness" can be linked to the first item (teaching) on Paul's list, it can also be closely tied to reproof and correction. The process of training implicitly involves reproof as well as correction. Through the process of training, believers are clearly told their weaknesses and areas which do not align with the objective standard set in Scripture. Those who "train" others "in righteousness" should be those who give gentle, loving, Christlike correction to those experiencing reproof. Being trained for righteousness relies on God's Word being inerrant and infallible. Without this doctrine, believers may become confused regarding what God *actually* deems righteous, or which parts of Scripture *truly* matter to God. Believers can know teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness are profitable because of Paul's doctrinal affirmation in verse 16: "All Scripture is breathed out by God."

Paul gives the purpose for the profitability of teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness in verse 17: "So that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Paul "wishes to say, in a wholly general manner, what instruction by the Scripture will secure for every believer, continuous, growing, inward

³⁹Ibid., 203.

capacity and readiness for the accomplishment of everything pleasing to the Lord.”⁴⁰ According to Paul, the purpose for understanding doctrine is not only good for the individual, but is for the greater purpose of building up the body of Christ by being *competent* and *equipped*.

As in previous examples, the two words Paul used may sound similar when read casually. However, the different connotations must be examined. Competency primarily deals with having proper training and expert knowledge of how to accomplish a specific task. Doctrinal understanding is fantastic for training believers to be competent in their knowledge of the nature of God, the Scriptures, the church, and Christian living. Competency may also be understood as having the adequate skills and abilities to perform and accomplish a certain task. When believers have a firm doctrinal understanding they have the skill and ability at their disposal to accomplish the task of growing themselves and others toward righteousness.

The example Paul uses of the believer being equipped has the connotation of having been given the tools necessary for the execution of a task. One is competent for the task of training themselves and others in Christian living because they have been thoroughly equipped with proper doctrinal understanding. While being equipped is the process, competency is the result.

By affirming “all Scripture is breathed out by God,” believers can trust in the profitability of being made competent for growth in Christ by equipping one’s self through the process of teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

Gentry and Wellum write,

After all, not only did the previous covenants serve their role in redemptive-history as part of God’s redemptive plan and revelation of himself, which is crucial for us, but they are also forever part of Scripture, which Paul reminds us is God-breathed

⁴⁰John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, and J. J. van Oosterze, *1 & 2 Timothy: A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, trans. E. A. Washburn and E. Harwood (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 109.

and useful for our instruction, growth, and ministry.⁴¹

The process of growth as a believer is held together by doctrinal propositions. Without the doctrinal presuppositions mentioned in this chapter, the believer may find it greatly difficult to progress in sanctification. Second Timothy 3:16-17 reveals the necessity of correct doctrinal understanding for one's growth in Christ.

Through the examination and conclusions of Mark 12:29-31, Romans 12:2, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the thesis is correct in asserting God calls every believer to understand the doctrine contained in Scripture.

⁴¹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 604-5.

CHAPTER 3
PRACTICAL IMPLICATION OF
KNOWING DOCTRINE

This chapter shows how increased knowledge of doctrine provides the believer with a deeper understanding of Scripture, an increased love for God and His Church, and enhances one's ability and desire to better evangelize and teach others. Doctrinal competency increases one's love for God by its ability to highlight the nature and will of God and the glory of Christ revealed in biblical teaching. Doctrinal competency also provides the believer with an increased aptitude to understand God and thereby, love Him more.

While the previous chapter focused on knowing and understanding Scripture using three passages, this chapter focuses not on knowing Scripture factually, but rather knowing the God of Scripture. Believers are commanded to know and understand the Lord. Knowing and understanding the Lord is ultimate motivation behind deepening one's knowledge of doctrine. Jeremiah 9:23-24 instructs believers to "understand and know" God. As in the examples, the two words Jeremiah employs are similar when read casually, however, have different meanings when a closer examination is made. The calling to both "understand" and "know" are imperative for the Christian. One is not seemingly valued higher than the other. One is called to have a cognitive knowledge about God: "An empirical experience, a development of ideas, and the comprehension of the meaning of their spiritual experiences."¹ Believers are also called to a comprehension

¹James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Grand Rapids: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 66.

of God which might be explained best using the term “understand.”² Merizow states that having a correct doctrinal understanding of God assists “the individual to become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others.”³

The believer is called to know certain attributes about God and His Word. Knowing is different from understanding. Knowing indicates a certain level of mental assent and grasping of facts, as well as items which do not need abstract thought to grasp. Knowing about Scripture, or knowing about God, could entail the cognitive memorization of certain passages of Scripture. One can know the truth of John 3:16 or John 14:6 without truly understanding the deep, eternal truths of those passages. Sometimes this process of knowing seems to be viewed as a secondary Christian trait when put against the more lofty task of “understanding” God. However, for a believer to truly understand the nature of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Scriptures, one must have a basic knowledge of what one is trying to understand. This is true in any aspect of life where understanding something is necessary. To understand one’s spouse, one must know certain truths about them. For someone to understand the law of the land, one must first know the law. One cannot separate knowing from understanding. Knowing and understanding God involves all aspects of one’s cognition displayed in such models as Piaget’s chronological stages of learning: reflexive, intuitive, concrete and abstract. It should be noted “these types of thinking also can be understood as people’s innate intellectual ability—regardless of where they are chronologically.”⁴

God clearly calls believers to know Him through the Scripture. One of the outstanding truths of the doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility is how it makes the task

²Esther Lightcap Meek, *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003).

³Jack Mezirow, quoted in Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 214.

⁴Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 69.

of knowing God something which can be achieved. One can trust they are growing in their knowledge of God when they read His Word and commit it to memory.

While believers are commanded to know God, it is not merely the knowing of material which brings unbelievers to salvation. However, “by far the greatest number of cases it is intellectual, rational functions that are ascribed to the heart,”⁵ believers “must guard against the false impression that Biblical man is determined more by feeling than by reason.”⁶ Believers are also commanded to take their knowledge, process this knowledge, and act upon what they know to be true. The means in which God offers salvation through Christ is through faith by the reading and preaching of God’s Word.⁷ In Jeremiah 9:23-24, believers are commanded to understand God. Understanding could be viewed in this context as the ability to apply knowledge as well as interpret the possible benefits and consequences of said knowledge. The process of understanding God can also develop over the course of a lifetime as one moves through natural stages of cognitive development.⁸ A person can certainly know things without understanding the truth of what is known. Knowledge and understanding are both integral aspects of the Christian life.

Understanding, in addition to knowing, provides the ability for correct moral reasoning and moral action relating to what one might cognitively know.⁹ Believers are

⁵Hans Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 46.

⁶Ibid., 47.

⁷Edward Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 70.

⁸James C. Wilhoit and John M. Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian: Developmental Perspectives on Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 52-54.

⁹Lawrence Kohlberg with D. Candee, *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 498-581.

called not only to know about, but also use the knowledge to actively be in relationship with God. Understanding, as opposed to knowledge only, leads individuals toward heart change. Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum write, “In both Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 6:10, one *understands* with the heart; surely then what is being referred to is what we normally call the mind. This is the place where we reason and think and understand.”¹⁰ Knowing about God is necessary for understanding; understanding is necessary for believers to approach God and be in relationship with Him. It is important to note, however, that exhaustive knowledge and understanding is not implied. One does not, nor cannot, comprehend the full mystery of God or the Scriptures. The process of knowing and understanding is a consistent, ever-growing endeavor to which all believers are called.

As the process of knowing and understanding doctrine continues, believers should find they are increasing in their love for God. It may be wondered why it is assumed believers would increase in their love for God as opposed to feeling another emotion. However, it should not be assumed a person grows in their love because they increase in their knowledge and understanding of a particular individual. For example, when someone increases in their knowledge and understanding of a specific individual or group love is not always the emotion which accompanies this knowledge and understanding. A person may know and understand someone yet find them to be cruel, malevolent, rude, and/or deceitful. When one properly knows and understands someone, they are known and understood based on their true merits and characteristics. Knowing and understanding does not always lead to love. Knowing and understanding leads individuals to an accurate representation of what is actually the case regarding an individual’s characteristics, whether for good or ill.

Doctrine is a wonderful tool by which believers are led in the process of both

¹⁰Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 367.

knowing certain truths about Christ, as well as understanding certain truths about God by synthesizing the biblical story into statements that reflect the overarching narrative of Scripture. Understanding Scripture “thematically” or doctrinally “may assist us in understanding the pieces that make up” Scripture.¹¹ When God is properly known and understood, the natural result of the believer is an increased love and commitment to Him, based on His merits and character attributes.

Correct doctrine is essential to the believer’s love for God in the respect that it represents how He intends to be represented. While doctrine is a fantastic system for synthesizing biblical/ theological content, the purpose of doctrine for believers is “to show the applicability of the great doctrines to everyday life.”¹² Correct doctrine attempts to reveal the truth of Scripture alone. Doctrine which fails to highlight God by making the truth of Scripture its foundational standard ceases to be doctrine at all, and instead becomes statements of one’s opinion of God.

Doctrine Increases Trust and Worship

When doctrine has its foundation in Scripture alone, the natural overflow from doctrinal understanding leads believers toward a system of thought and practice which serves to increase their trust in Christ and worship Him correctly. Gerhard Maier writes,

If we take it seriously that God has made Scripture the locus of encounter with him, and that Scripture’s authority is rooted in the personal authority of the God who speaks, then an intellectualized acknowledgement of Scripture will not suffice. The goal of Scripture lies rather in our obedience.¹³

For example, when one’s doctrinal understanding of the Trinity is correct, one does not have to wonder whether worshipping God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit is an act of

¹¹Thomas Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 11.

¹²Christopher Kaiser, *The Doctrine of God: A Historical Survey* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1982), 99.

¹³Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 180.

polytheism. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals God “the eternal Triune God” revealed “as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct person attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.”¹⁴

John Piper writes, “So the Bible is the Word of God. And the Word of God is no trifle. It is the source of life and faith and power and hope and freedom and wisdom and comfort and assurance and victory over our greatest enemy.”¹⁵ Having a correct knowledge and understanding of doctrine does not constrain the believer to a certain set of beliefs, it frees them to worship Who is true and what is actually true regarding God. Correct doctrine alleviates the pressure of approaching aspects of the Christian life incorrectly such as for raising children,¹⁶ how believers are to act within society,¹⁷ how believers are to do evangelism and missions,¹⁸ etc.¹⁹ Doctrine is not simply making beliefs regarding faith easier to understand so believers do not have to do serious thought or in-depth analysis of their faith. Even though doctrine provides the believer assessable statements, the purpose of those statements are to synthesize biblical teaching on a topic for the purpose of providing the believer clarity. Doctrine may be understood as a concise statement of systematic theology which is not exhaustively delineated.

When believers are increasingly led to correct doctrinal understandings that reflect the truth of Scripture, the natural result for believers is a confrontation with the

¹⁴The Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2000), 7.

¹⁵John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 152.

¹⁶The Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 21.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹For further information on Southern Baptist engagement with culture, see Paul Basden, *Has Our Theology Change? Southern Baptist Thought Since 1845* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994).

true God. One of the purposes of doctrine should be to clarify and assist believers in understanding what the entire Bible teaches on a certain topic of Scripture, applied by the Holy Spirit, will enact life change in the individual.²⁰ By knowing and understanding the true nature of God through correct doctrine rooted in Scripture, believers learn and are brought to know the amazing and wonderful nature of God and as a result, love Him more. Having a proper doctrinal grid by which to interpret Scripture provides believers a framework for examining elements in Scripture and in their personal life where God may not seem near, caring, or loving. Correct doctrine points to God's sinlessness and His sovereignty over all creation. Correct doctrine exhibits God as one who is always working "all things . . . together for the good of those who are called according to His purposes" (Rom 8.28).

Doctrine Aids in Knowing God's Will

Knowing and understanding doctrine offers the believer the ability to know the nature and will of God. Wayne Grudem defines God's will as "the final or most ultimate reason for everything that happens."²¹ Understanding doctrine does not exhaustively provide the believer with every answer in some details of life, such as which job to take or which school to attend. Doctrine does, however, aid the believer in discerning the will of God by knowing how to approach Him regarding personal wants and desires. Doctrine assists believers by giving them a synthesized system of belief, rooted in Scripture, which provides the tools for discerning God's will in navigating life's most difficult questions.

While knowing the will of God is a more abstract task that requires doctrine to inform one's decision making, the believer is also able to know the nature of God which

²⁰Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 28-37.

²¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 211.

is outside of human influence and can be objectively knowable through Scripture. Through knowing doctrine, believers can draw certain conclusions on a given topic regarding God and Scripture which are reflected in His Word. These elements of objective knowable attributes about the nature and function of God could be how one is brought to faith in Christ,²² what Scripture says about mankind,²³ as well as baptism and the Lord's Supper.²⁴ Not only are matters of God's attributes made clear in doctrinal statements, aspects of how mankind is to relate and approach God, and how to structure worship communities are aspects of doctrine that can be asserted rather objectively from biblical texts.

Doctrine Increases Love for God

The process of understanding and knowing doctrine provides the believer the aptitude to increasingly love and understand God. It is important to note how this process increases aptitude to grow in these areas. The ability to know and understand doctrine, as stated previously, are intertwined—both are necessary for Christian discipleship. Doctrine has also been alluded to as foundational, providing the believer with statements by which they can feel more affirmed in their faith. Furthermore, doctrine not only provides accurate foundations, but also the means to excel in discipleship. Foundational theological doctrines such as God being one, Creator and sovereign over all creation provide believers with entry point doctrinal tenets upon which can be built doctrinal tenets such as the deity of Christ, His dual nature, as well as the omnipresence, omnipotent, and omniscience of God.

For example, language begins with the foundation of letters, sounds and basic grammatical structure. When these basic elements of language are grasped, more nuanced

²²Ibid., 11.

²³Ibid., 10.

²⁴Ibid., 14.

and intricate uses of language have the potential to emerge. Depth in the use of language can only occur when one is basing the work on proper grammatical foundations. One cannot write nuanced and intricate sentences if the basic concepts of subjects, predicates, nouns, and verbs are not understood.

Doctrine also serves to assist believers wherever one finds themselves in discipleship because

readers bring to the text personal emphasis and meanings that have been shaped by their unique experiences. Thus what they get when they read a text is not an objective account or even what the author may have meant, but their own interpretation based upon generally unconscious presuppositions.²⁵

As believers progress through what Fowler notes as the six stages of faith, believers with correct doctrinal presuppositions have the ability to process the truth of Scripture in whichever life context one might find himself.²⁶ Therefore, the importance of correct doctrinal presuppositions are vital for believers to grasp the accuracy of other doctrines and concepts. Belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ certainly has implications for the bodily return of Christ. A trust in the doctrine of inerrancy has implications for how serious believers treat the claims of any biblical writer, as well as how serious one is to take the words of Christ. If one is to believe the claim of salvation is in no one but Jesus by citing Christ as “the way, the truth and the life no one comes to the Father but through me,” (John 14:6) one must firmly trust in the doctrine of inerrancy and infallibility. Otherwise, this foundational truth of the exclusivity of Jesus being the only way of salvation, pivotal in most doctrine throughout the history of Christianity, might be rendered subjective at best or inaccurate at worst by those who wish not to agree with Christ’s claims about Himself. A denial of the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture could lead a congregation toward a methodology which seeks comfort rather than

²⁵George Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 93.

²⁶Wilhoit and Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian*, 52-54.

sanctification, and entertainment value over doctrinal substance.²⁷

Correct doctrine provides the believer an increased aptitude for knowing and understanding God because it layers the truth about Scripture, giving the deeper truth about God and the Scriptures a solid foundation on which to rest.

Since believers have the aptitude to grow by the assistance of an ever-increasing doctrinal structure, it is worth noting what primary objectives doctrine assists believers in achieving. Doctrine is mainly concerned with asserting what believers in Christ *should* believe regarding God, the Scriptures, and the church. By stating what believers should know, doctrine assists believers first in their ability to understand God. Knowledge informs one's understanding. One can understand that Christ died for sinners because they know from reading Scripture that He did so. As believers continue to study and know biblically-based doctrine, these synthesized statements, reflecting Scripture's teaching on a topic using the overarching narrative of Scripture, give the believer a consistent growing understanding of the nature of God. Not only does doctrine provide believers with an understanding of the nature of God, but furthermore, as noted previously, gives the believer the ability to understand how God would want believers to structure worship and act outside the church.

A proper understanding of doctrine should not lead to a rigid disciple of study, but instead to an understanding of the grandeur of the mind and heart of the Lord. Believers, by knowing correct doctrine, should be brought to hear the gospel in all its glory in every facet of life. J. I. Packer explains, "Well might God say through Jeremiah, 'Let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me'—for knowing God is a relationship calculated to feed a person's heart."²⁸ When presented and taught correctly, doctrine provides believers a means to grasp what the Scriptures teach on any

²⁷John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 22-23.

²⁸J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 36.

subject. Doctrine, therefore, can be applied at any time to any cultural context if it is properly and accurately rooted in Scripture.

By understanding correct doctrine, believers have an ever-increasing aptitude to love God. As noted, when one knows and understands a person, an assessment of one's merit and character are determined, whether for good or ill. When correct doctrinal conclusions are drawn and taught, one's reaction toward the Lord will invariably be of love and adoration based on His traits which are made clear to believers through the synthesizing of the biblical text into doctrinal assertions.

One's love for God should ever-increase as doctrinal competency increases, as well as encourage one's love for their fellow man. One of the key doctrinal statements made in the previous chapter was how understanding the prime commandments from God entails a love for God with all one's "heart, soul, mind and strength." These commandments given by Christ are revealed in how one progresses in sanctification and discipleship and are demonstrated by how one loves their "neighbor as yourself." Doctrine serves to build the individual so others might come to "know and understand" Christ (Jer 9:23-24).

By this examination, doctrinal competency increases love for God by its ability to highlight the nature and will of God and the glory of Christ revealed in biblical teaching. Doctrinal competency also provides the believer with an increased aptitude to understand God and thereby, love Him more.

Doctrine Synthesizes Biblical Teaching

Believers must first understand the nature of Scripture in order to understand the nature of doctrine. Believers must also understand the meaning of the term *doctrine*, as well as what doctrine should accomplish within the church and for the believer. Doctrine synthesizes biblical teaching in every stage of development. L. Richards writes that doctrine has the ability to "translate the great truths of faith into thought units" to be experienced at any level "because Scripture is a reality revelation, the great realities it

portrays can be experienced on every level.”²⁹ When one approaches Scripture without a proper doctrinal understanding, incorrect presuppositions about the text may emerge.

Maier explains,

Yet it is precisely our presuppositions that the Bible wants to place in question, correct, and to some extent obliterate. One of the difficulties . . . is this: I as a human can never work without presuppositions and must at the same time constantly realize that my presuppositions are shaped by sin.³⁰

Whether one is a believer or not, each person brings certain presuppositions to the biblical text as well as personal opinions on doctrine.³¹ Maier continues, “Yet it is precisely our presuppositions that the Bible wants to place in question, correct, and to some extent obliterate.”³² These presuppositions and opinions are usually based on both previous faith experiences and understandings or misunderstandings of text-based external sources. Therefore, it is important to formulate doctrine on what specifically the biblical text says and what it originally intended to mean. Robert Stein writes, “What a text meant when it was written, it will always mean. It can no more change than any other event of the past can change, because its meaning is forever anchored in past history.”³³

Doctrine, when discussed vaguely, is simply rules and presuppositions one brings to their faith which form their grid of interpretation of Scripture. Believers in any faith context have certain doctrinal presuppositions that inform their belief structure. While the metaphysical claims of Christianity are true, doctrine as a concept is not limited to Christianity. Even those who may claim to hold no particular faith, have

²⁹L. Richards, *A Theology of Children’s Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 122.

³⁰Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 25.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 26.

guiding principles by which they order their life. Such guiding principles include political affiliations, how they work their jobs, raise their children, and function/do not function in marriage. Sadly, having a secular ideology, which could be understood as one's doctrine, has influenced the church. John Frame illustrates this point: "Churches and individual Christians devoted to the service of God often govern their lives by the standards of modern secular culture, rather than by the Word of God."³⁴ Individuals functioning within the church who are attempting to serve God while being guided by modern secular culture can lead churches to what David Wells deems a "weightless of God."³⁵

However, in this context, the term *doctrine* or *doctrinal* will refer strictly to the metaphysical claims found in, and presuppositions derived from, the Holy Bible. Graeme Goldsworthy explains,

Christian doctrine (systematic or dogmatic theology) involves a systematic gathering of the doctrines of the Bible under various topics to form a body of definitive Christian teaching about man, sin, grace, the church, sacraments, ministry, and so on.³⁶

As stated, understanding doctrine deepens one's understanding of Scripture. Doctrine, when stated correctly, should serve to clarify passages of Scripture which might otherwise appear unclear. A basic example of doctrine which clarifies a potentially difficult passage would be Matthew 8:23-27 when Jesus calms the storm. Without any presuppositional understanding of doctrine, one might be tempted to read this story and wonder why Jesus has the power to calm storms while the reader does not have this ability. One may also wonder how Jesus came to possess such power. Without a doctrinal framework regarding Jesus' omnipotence, statements such as these seem very natural. When believers read these passages, they do not question why or how Jesus had the

³⁴John Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 2.

³⁵David Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 88-117.

³⁶Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012), 44-45.

ability to calm storm. When a believer reads this particular story, they have the doctrinal understanding of God being creator, ruler and executor over all creation.

Believers in Christ also read the story of Jesus calming the storm with the doctrinal understanding of the dual nature of Christ. While the above questions of why and how Jesus came to possess such power may persist, they will be only in the context of an effort to more deeply understand how God as creator, ruler, and executor works in the created order, as well as how to properly understand the doctrine of the dual nature of Christ. The believer, by understanding doctrine based on the overarching narrative of Scripture, now has a grid and framework to understand Scripture accurately.

In order for Christian doctrine to be beneficial for the believer, one must have a basic understanding of how doctrine is formulated. It is difficult to avoid certain doctrinal assumptions when it comes to God or Scripture. One might believe doctrine only divides and does not unify believers in Christ. While doctrine has the potential to divide individuals, especially when discussed in a spirit which does not glorify Christ, but seeks victory in theological discussion, it does not invalidate the need or the usefulness of doctrine. The fact of doctrine dividing believers is not a problematic issue in regard to the attempt to have accurate doctrine; rather, doctrinal division between believers indicates the need for a Savior due to sin in how believers discuss matters of biblical interpretation.

When one initially approaches the biblical text, doctrinal understanding is limited. In many cases, the first exposure a believer has to Scripture is as a child. When believers teach children Scripture, primarily through story and song, the stories are generally accompanied with short, easy-to-understand statements regarding doctrine.³⁷ Typically stories, such as the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, usually include doctrinal application points such as the need to love a neighbor in the same way as the Samaritan

³⁷Jerome Berryman, "Children and Mature Spirituality," in *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, ed. Donald Ratcliff (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 22-41.

because God loves the whole world, or the need to love those who are not kind because God loves people even when as sinners.

The doctrinal application points in a story such as the Good Samaritan may seem rudimentary; however, they provide the basic framework for one's concept of how God interacts with His creation. Application points such as God loving the whole world, loving one's neighbor and those who do not reciprocate kindness, are foundational to the logic of what was accomplished through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

Additionally, doctrine provides believers with the means to read Scripture for personal application. Edmund Clowney writes,

It is possible to know Bible stories, yet miss *the* Bible story...It is more than bewildering collection of oracles, proverbs, poems, architectural directions, annals, and prophecies. . . . The story is God's story. It describes His work to rescue rebels from their folly, guilt, and ruin.³⁸

Not only are doctrines beneficial individually, they are also beneficial in how they relate to one another. Some doctrinal tenets provide the foundation by which other doctrines may be built upon.

For instance, the doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility provide the most basic foundation for understanding and interpreting Scripture. When believers read Scripture, it is not read as stories being of no value or mere fantasy. Although there are instances in the Scripture by which the literary tools of simile and metaphor, parable and storytelling are employed, it is not done for the purpose of entertainment or leading the reader down a path of untruth. The doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility allow the reader to know when they read Scripture they are reading words which have been inspired and "breathed out" by God (2 Tim 3:16). The doctrine of inerrancy and infallibility provide a foundation for the literal, bodily resurrection of Christ. If the doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility were not doctrines to which believers held, the bodily resurrection of Christ

³⁸Edmund Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1998), 11.

might be questioned in a variety of ways.

Doctrine, however, does not arise from the need to justify what an individual, or group of individuals, believe regarding Scripture. Doctrine can be formed from certain themes and issues in Scripture where God is repeatedly consistent and objectively verifiable on an issue. The dual nature of Christ as well as the exclusivity of Christ for salvation are examples of doctrinal statements that meet the requirements for consistent, objective affirmation in Scripture and should be believed by all believers in Christ.

Doctrine can also be formed by examining the overarching narrative of Scripture and drawing a conclusion based on the text. These types of doctrines have the potential to divide believers if they are not debated in a spirit of Christlikeness and humility. Doctrinal issues such as the nature of the sovereignty of God and transubstantiation versus consubstantiation are beliefs people hold with great passion and feel Scripture justifies their position exclusively.

Ultimately, doctrine is the means by which believers are to take large truth claims regarding God and Scripture and synthesize them into manageable statements which provide the grid for biblical interpretation and Christian living.³⁹ Doctrine, however biblically based, is not a substitute for Scripture. The correctness of an issue is based solely on Scripture. Doctrine assists in illuminating and understanding God and Scripture. The believer should not believe in certain doctrinal tenets because they are the doctrine of their particular faith community. Believers should trust doctrinal statements in so far as they point toward Christ and the exaltation of the Scriptures. The function of doctrine is to do no more or less than point believers toward these two primary ends. Doctrinal statements should not be held as truth in the same way biblical text is held as truth. Biblical doctrine should lead believers toward truth and hopefully illuminate passages of Scripture that might be difficult to understand otherwise.

³⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 14.

The Baptist Faith and Message of the Southern Baptist Convention is a doctrinal statement which outlines basic doctrinal beliefs of Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists do not hold *The Baptist Faith and Message* as an inerrant or infallible document. In fact, *The Baptist Faith and Message* was based on early statements of faith such as the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* and has been amended and “revised at certain points with some additional articles growing out of certain needs.”⁴⁰

While adherence to *The Baptist Faith and Message* is not strictly enforced by Southern Baptist Convention, the contents of the document do seem to agree with the scriptural requirements both for New Testament churches⁴¹ and believers in Jesus Christ.

While adherence to *The Baptist Faith and Message* is not mandatory, it is concise and biblically-based enough to provide churches with a solid, doctrinally rich set of beliefs by which the majority of Southern Baptist churches and their attendance might agree. While the wording may not be the ultimate preference for all members of all churches, the doctrines were written in such a way as to provide the greatest amount of clarity and brevity. The eighteen doctrines contained in *The Baptist Faith and Message* provide the basic framework of belief upon which most conservative churches within the Southern Baptist Convention can agree.

Doctrine delineated in this manner provides identity, purpose, mission, consistency, and clarity across thousands of churches. This particular identity, purpose, mission, and consistency among Southern Baptist churches might not exist if these basic statements of doctrine were not made available.

From the preceding examination, it seems clear how understanding doctrine deepens understanding of Scripture by its ability to synthesize biblical teaching on issues, providing the believer a framework by which to interpret Scripture.

⁴⁰The Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 4.

⁴¹Chad Brand and David Hankins, *One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 28-52.

Doctrine and Evangelism

One's ability to perform the function of evangelism requires correct doctrinal presuppositions because "in the end, the Great Commission must be the mission of the church for two very basic reasons: there is something worse than death, and there is something better than human flourishing."⁴² Aspects such as how one approaches a person who may not have a relationship with Christ, the nature of one's sin nature in need of redemption, how one is presented with the gospel, as well as the deity and bodily resurrection of Christ, are aspects of evangelism that hinge on accurate doctrinal presuppositions. These doctrinal aspects should be a matter in which the church is intensely focused.⁴³

If one is operating under incorrect doctrinal presuppositions, the one being evangelized might be led to believe aspects about being a Christian which are untrue. For example, if one is operating with the incorrect assumption that a person might lose their salvation due to further sin after their genuine salvation experience, then one will misunderstand how Christ's death atoned for sin past, present, and future. This misunderstanding of how Christ's atoning death functions might lead a believer to depend more on work-based modes of sanctification rather than upon the Holy Spirit to do His sanctifying work in their life. Alvin Reid explains, "We should witness out of obedience—not because we are comfortable doing it. Our character must grow out of convictions hammered on the anvil of God's Word."⁴⁴

Furthermore, correct doctrinal presuppositions better enable the believer to evangelize by aiding in their ability to answer the questions of unbelievers. One who is

⁴²Kevin Deyoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 242.

⁴³Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 219.

⁴⁴Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 114.

not doctrinally trained may find it difficult to engage in discourse with an unbeliever who may express a genuine interest, yet may have valid questions they wish to explore. While a dynamic life lived in love toward an unbeliever is a powerful witness, one must not downplay the importance of “always having an answer for the hope that is within you” (1 Pet 3:15). Peter does not claim this verse as only a means by which believers win arguments or make more compelling cases against those who might not believe. The main reason Peter encourages believers to have an “answer for the hope that is within you” is for the purpose of honoring Christ in the heart “as holy” (1 Pet 3: 15). Having doctrinal competency leads believers to have a more keen ability of honoring the Lord as holy by always being ready to engage in dialogue done in “gentleness and respect” with unbelievers.

Christians certainly are not biblically mandated to be doctrinally astute in an exhaustive fashion in order to share their faith. However, being trained and competent on fundamental doctrine enables believers to evangelize unbelievers with an increased amount of biblical accuracy and increased confidence.

Additionally, one’s desire for evangelism will increase when one has a proper grasp of biblically-based doctrine. When believers understand the scriptural mandate for missions and evangelism from correct doctrine, they not only have the ability to do missions and evangelism well, but have a deep desire to do so.⁴⁵

Desire is different from ability. Ability can mean having the tools at one’s disposal to accomplish a certain task or function. Simply because one has ability does not mean one has desire. Desire comes from a feeling of urgency and a deeply focused want of something to be true. Doctrine should not only equip believers to share their faith and do missions, but it should also be the primary driving force behind why believers do

⁴⁵David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God’s Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 47-59.

missions and share their faith. Robert Coleman writes, “Jesus’ life was simply the revelation in time of God’s eternal purpose to save for himself a people. Supremely this is what the disciples needed to learn, not in theory, but in practice.”⁴⁶ An imperative to share one’s faith is felt when one recognizes the eternal significance of such doctrine as the exclusivity of Christ and the reality of Hell. Doctrines such as the two just mentioned should cause a sense of urgency and a desire to inform others of the necessity of knowing and understanding Jesus Christ.

The desire doctrine arouses a “profound sense of a God-stirred ought, a burden for lost souls in a dying world, a burning desire to see every people group in the world prostrate in worship before the throne of God.”⁴⁷ Doctrine drives believers to inform others of the most foundational truths of existence. When a believer is driven by doctrine to tell another about Christ it is replicating the mercy and generosity they were showed when they were told of Christ. Missions and evangelism are, in effect, loving your neighbor “as yourself.”

Doctrine should serve to encourage believers to love those who do not yet know Christ. Doctrine, when known and understood properly from a biblically-based framework, should cause believers to have compassion, mercy, patience, and gentleness with those whom yet do not know Christ. When Christ is understood as the highest treasure, one does not wish to keep it for themselves. An increased desire to participate in missions and evangelism is the natural overflow from a worldview thoroughly entrenched with proper biblically-based doctrine.

Doctrine and Teaching

When doctrinal competency is valued, believers increase in their ability to

⁴⁶Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2005), 62.

⁴⁷Sills, *The Missionary Call*, 200.

teach others about Christ. One of the best functions for proper doctrine is in the area of teaching. Doctrine not only provides the foundation for teaching, but it is also the primary substance of what is being taught. When teaching is correct, the teacher, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, aids in the birth of correct ideas and doctrines in others. Biblically-based doctrine provides the believer with the content of what is correct and incorrect about God, Scripture, and the church in an objective fashion. As previously noted, doctrine is synthesized theological teachings on the contents of Scripture. When the overarching theme of Scripture is synthesized on a topic, patterns begin to emerge regarding different elements of Scripture. The one teaching or disciplining another individual or group has the opportunity to take these synthesized teachings and communicate them to their listeners.

Furthermore, doctrine serves as a guide when doing Scriptural interpretation.

Ian Murray writes,

This is not to deny that men even in their best state are subject to prejudice and fallibility in their interpretation of the Word. But though human weakness makes our obedience to Scripture imperfect, it in no way excuses the necessity of total commitment.⁴⁸

When Jesus speaks regarding being Him “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6), the believer does not have to wonder if Jesus was using symbolism or hyperbole regarding his deity or exclusivity. The teacher can know and teach with confidence, based on the doctrinal presuppositions of the exclusivity of Christ for salvation, as well as the doctrinal presupposition of the deity of Christ, that these words are true and intend to mean exactly what Jesus said.

One’s ability to teach Scripture is also heightened by understanding doctrine when put in a situation where questions are posed. For many teachers in a local church context, questions regarding issues they feel ill-equipped and unconfident to answer can

⁴⁸Ian Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 218.

be difficult and may have the potential to leave teachers feeling as if this may not be their place of service in the church. Having a proper biblically-based knowledge and understanding of doctrine could alleviate a great deal of this trepidation on the part of the teacher. While not always perfect in their answers, teachers who know and understand basic doctrinal tenets should feel a certain level of confidence when students ask questions regarding Christian life and conduct.

If one is raised in a church setting, certain doctrinal tenets are taught from childhood. Tenets such as the Trinity, inerrancy and infallibility, and the exclusivity of Christ for salvation are a few doctrines taught from childhood. Other doctrines such as how the church is supposed to function in society,⁴⁹ peace and war, and religious liberty⁵⁰ are doctrines which Christians who are leading in a teaching setting should at minimum be aware and have a working knowledge of in the event a student asks a question related to these topics.

While Scripture, not doctrine, is the primary tool a teacher uses for communicating truth to their students, doctrine is a helpful tool for any teacher wishing to further their students' knowing, understanding, and use of Scripture in an applicable way in their lives. Doctrine provides a means of being clear about what one or a group of believers believe regarding Christ and the Scriptures, as well as distinguish themselves from other systems of believers. Doctrinal statements provide those outside the faith or denomination a means by which they can examine and evaluate the claims offered by a specific body of believers. John Piper explains, "A widespread and long-held doctrinal difference among Christians does not mean that the difference is insignificant or that we

⁴⁹The Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 19.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

should not seek to persuade toward the truth and seek agreement.”⁵¹

Doctrine is a useful aid in a similar way serious students of the Scripture read and study systematic theology in their pursuit of holiness. Doctrine does not replace Scripture, nor is doctrine Scripture’s equal, especially in a teaching setting. The function of doctrine for those teaching is to be a helpful supplement to Scripture for the students in an effort to communicate the message of Scripture with greater clarity and effectiveness.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. writes, “If the Bible is not the Word of God, the preacher is involved in an act of self-delusion or professional pretension. Standing on the authority of Scripture, the preacher declares a truth received, not a message invented.”⁵²

A biblically-based doctrinal framework not only increases one’s ability to teach God’s Word, it also increases the desire to teach and communicate God’s Word. “The task of fulfilling the Great Commission includes therefore not only evangelism but also *teaching*.”⁵³ As in the case of missions and evangelism, simply because one has ability to accomplish a certain task or function does not necessarily mean one has the desire.

The desire to teach and communicate God’s Word comes from both a knowledge and an understanding of God and the Scriptures. The teacher desires to teach God’s Word because the individual is convinced of the truth the Scripture contains. In this particular context, I am not writing of those who teach Scripture as mere literature. I am writing of teachers primarily in a local church of educational capacity who love the Lord and want to communicate the truth of Scripture to others. The primary reason those

⁵¹John Piper, *Contending for Our All: Defending Truth and Treasuring Christ in the Lives of Athanasius, John Owen, and J. Gresham Machen* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 66.

⁵²R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 72.

⁵³Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 27.

who teach from the perspective of God’s Word being something believers must both know and understand is because they fundamentally grasp that, doctrinally, God’s Word is inerrant and infallible and, therefore, worthy of serious study and reflection. Gary Bredfeldt writes, “Authentic Biblical leadership is first defined by how the leader, and the ministry under that leader’s care, views and responds to the Bible. Remember, it is the authority of the Word of God that is paramount to Christian leadership.”⁵⁴ One realizes, through doctrinal tenets based upon Scripture, not only *can* one communicate Scripture to students, but one *should* communicate Scripture to students. Doctrine not only provides the tools from which believers are to teach, but provides the basis for believers’ desires to do so. Biblically-based doctrinal truths guide both students and teachers alike toward Christ. When Christ is known and understood one cannot help but have a desire wrought in their heart by the Holy Spirit to teacher others to love God “with all their heart, soul, mind and strength” (Mark 12: 29) as well.

Doctrine assists teacher’s desire to communicate God’s Word by informing what it is they believe about Scripture. “Doctrine is for God’s glory. The doctrine of sovereignty serves the interest of his glory. The doctrine of sin serves the interest of his glory. The doctrines of election and preterition serve the interest of his glory. All doctrine is about his glory. All of it.”⁵⁵ When the teacher recognizes their biblical doctrine aligns with the truth of Scripture, one is far more confident and desirous to communicate what they know to be true. Doctrinal competency serves to enhance one’s ability and desire to better evangelize and teach others.

By the preceding examination, this chapter has revealed that increased knowledge of doctrine provides the believer with a deeper understanding of Scripture, an

⁵⁴Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 79.

⁵⁵Mark Dever et al., *Proclaiming a Cross-Centered Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 53.

increased love for God and His Church and enhances one's ability and desire to better evangelize and teach others.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Preparation for teaching the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* entailed the formulation of the student journal from a digital file into bound copies. I ensured more copies of the student journal were made than were perhaps necessary in the event of a large turnout for the study. Since the time and resources required to make the student journals would be voluminous, I opted to take one loose copy of the student journal to a local printing business for copy and binding. Eighty spiral-bound copies of the student journal were obtained.

The pre- and post-series survey was replicated through use of the church's printer. While copies of *The Baptist Faith and Message* were included as an appendix of the student journal for ease of access for the students, I also provided each student an official copy of the.

Introduction to the Series

The introduction session conducted on May 4, 2014, was completed by ensuring optimal seating for the 42 individuals who attended the first session . All materials, including student journals, pre-series surveys, copies of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, and writing utensils were made available to students as they entered the classroom. After the students arrived, a brief keynote presentation was given. The presentation delineated the purpose of the study and gave instructions regarding the use of student journal, the purpose of a codeword used in the surveys, as well as instructions on taking the survey and how to view sessions in the event of being absent. Students were instructed to ask questions regarding their pre-series survey, but were made aware that I

would not give relevant information which might lead them toward a particular answer.

After the completion of the opening instructions, students were instructed to begin their pre-series survey. As students completed the pre-series survey, a sheet was passed which students put their given name on the left side of the page and their codeword on the right side of the page in the event they do not remember their codeword during the post-series survey. I placed the codeword sheet in a sealed envelope in front of the students when the codeword sheet was completed by all attendees. Students were given at least forty-five minutes to complete the survey. All respondents completed their survey in the allotted timeframe. Students were instructed to raise their hand and submit the survey when it was completed. I placed completed pre-series surveys face down on a separate table to ensure the anonymity of their codeword and any answers which might be visible on the top sheet.

When all students turned in their completed pre-series survey, I had a time of debriefing. The participants discussed how they felt about the survey and which questions or topics they thought were challenging. After the debriefing, I assigned Articles I-II for the next week's session, then dismissed in prayer.

In preparation for the first teaching session, I ensured adequate seating for all participants. During the pre-series survey session, I had more attendees for the session than anticipated. While the abundance of participants was a positive occurrence, seating, however, proved to be an issue. Seating for the first teaching session was rearranged to accommodate all who wished to participate.

Teaching Sessions

Session 1

During the first teaching session, I attempted to cover the first two tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The two tenets were combined because, based on the level of church involvement from most participants, they were relatively familiar and had orthodox views in regard to their stance on the fundamental elements of these Articles.

I began by reading the first tenet of *The Baptist Faith and Message* regarding the Scriptures. The nature of the discussion did not focus primarily on whether Scripture was inerrant and infallible, but instead on the method God utilized in communicating the Scriptures to human authors. The nature of inspiration seemed to be a topic in which the participants enjoyed discussing. In order to clarify some of the questions regarding inspiration, I also focused on hermeneutics. I addressed questions such as how believers are to understand inerrancy and infallibility within differing genres of biblical literature, as well as questions regarding commandments that believers seem to hold without reservation versus other commandments, such as wearing garments of mixed fabrics (Lev 19:19; Deut 22:11), which believers do not explicitly follow today.

I also attempted to cover Article II: “God,” during this session. I followed the flow of writing in *The Baptist Faith and Message* by giving an overarching view and definition of God then proceeded to address Godhead in the Persons of the Trinity.

Each person of the Trinity was examined in terms of role and function. Obviously, given time restraints, each member of the Trinity was not exhaustively covered; however, I attempted to provide each participant a general idea of each member of the Trinity by means of an overview of the role and function of each member. Furthermore, I made comments regarding the role each member accomplishes within the Trinitarian relationship. At the conclusion of the session, I assigned the next week’s topics and dismissed in prayer.

Session 2

Session 2 focused upon the tenets of “Man” and “Salvation.” The session began with a focus on the differentiation between being made in God’s image and likeness. Respondents gave a variety of answers spanning from image and likeness are expressions of the same reality, but “simply using different words,” to image is a reflection of his emotional, cognitive, and relational faculties whereas likeness is a reflection that people function “like” or “similar” to God in stewardship over creation.

The “gift of gender” was also explored and was primarily agreed upon without much discussion. However, I did point out how the giftedness of both genders is reflected in being created in God’s image and likeness and therefore gender should be viewed as a blessing.

The session brought about a wealth of lively discussion in terms of understanding the concept of what it means to be “capable of moral action.” Participants wanted to discuss the finer point on what it means to understand morality, how a person is able to understand morality and whether a person makes a moral dissection without explicitly understanding they are making moral choices. Issues which were raised by participants were how to understand accountability for moral actions in the mentally disabled, toddlers, or senior adults suffering from some form of dementia. Discussion also focused on the statement made in *The Baptist Faith and Message* regarding people becoming “transgressors and under condemnation” only when they have the capability of understanding their “moral action.” Some members reflected this might be in conflict with the concept of original sin.

The concept of salvation was covered without disagreement. This tenet seemed to be enthusiastically received by the members of the class. This tenet was extremely helpful in explaining salvation as not simply one exclusive act which happens when one prays to receive Christ, but rather begins when one receives Christ as Savior and continues their entire life and culminates in glorification in heaven. This tenet seemed to refocus their knowledge and understanding regarding God’s desire to use all circumstances in the believer’s life to conform them to the image of Christ. At the conclusion of the session, I assigned the next week’s topic and dismissed in prayer.

Session 3

The focus of session 3 was the tenet outlining “God’s Purpose for Grace.” I anticipated this session would generate the most discussion and divergence of response. My assessment was correct. The issue of election elicited not only a wealth of response,

but a great deal of resistance as well. While many participants listened, asked questions, and commented, it seemed as if others were greatly agitated by the article. A great deal of confusion seemed to surround this topic with questions such as, if election were true what is the need for evangelism and missions, why would God purposely send a person to Hell, and how can election be true when “God desires that all people come to faith in Christ.”

The topic of the session generated more discussion than the content written in *The Baptist Faith and Message* itself. I was unable to teach the entire tenet due to the questions and comments by the participants. During the session, questions from the participants sparked other questions for which participants wanted answers. I found it difficult to teach this session as well due to being unable to answer questions in their entirety. I attempted to answer a question, and would often be interrupted by the participant or another participant.

Even though teaching this tenet proved difficult, I provided some members of the group with interesting points to consider and cause some members of the group to reevaluate their concept of how God works in calling believers to salvation. If I were to teach this session again, I would ask participants to hold their questions and comments to the end to allow the content to be taught. If I were allowed to fully teach the content with minimal interruption, some of the issues and questions would have been adequately answered in the process. After the session was completed, I assigned the next week’s topic and closed in prayer.

Session 4

Session 4 covered the tenets of “The Church and Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” In this session, participants discussed the benefits of local church autonomy among Southern Baptists and the potential issues a church could face if they did not affirm the autonomy of the local congregation. Along with autonomy of the local congregation, the necessity for church members to be baptized believers in order to participate within church governance was also discussed. Participants discussed why it

was necessary for baptism to occur in order for membership and participation in local Southern Baptist congregations who hold to *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Participants discussed the purpose and benefit of having a democratic process within a local Southern Baptist church, instead of a hierarchal structure which dictates the direction of the church via an outside authority seen in Roman Catholicism. The only aspect of the discussion which garnered slight disagreement among some was the topic of the women in ministry. While most members agreed with the traditional Southern Baptist understanding of a male-only clergy and deacon body, some challenged this notion and mentioned they may not see this idea clearly or overwhelmingly supported in Scripture. While this variant viewpoint was raised, it seemed it was not the consensus view of the participants who hold to male-only local church leadership.

The traditional Southern Baptist understanding of baptism by immersion was also confirmed by members of the class. Some participants mentioned they had been sprinkled as children, and through an examination of the Scriptures came to understand baptism as strictly through immersion. I led participants through understanding the importance of baptizing in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, instead of baptizing an individual generically in the Name of “God.” Participants noted an explicit need for each member of the Trinity to be mentioned in baptism is not only scriptural, but also provides specificity to in Whose Name one is being baptized. Participants discussed baptism as not only a symbolic representation of an inward act but also a commemoration of one’s “faith in the resurrection from the dead.”¹

Finally, participants discussed the Lord’s Supper and all were in agreement regarding its symbolic nature both for what it represents and also in physical form, rejecting the Roman Catholic belief in transubstantiation of communion elements. After the session material was covered, I provided their next assignment and closed in prayer.

¹The Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2000), 14.

Session 5

Session 5 covered the topic of “The Kingdom.” Participants discussed God’s general sovereignty over creation as well as his particular kingship over believers. I outlined the difference between God being sovereign over all creation versus his particular kingship. I discussed that while God is sovereign over the universe it does not mean all people are included in the kingdom of Christ, specifically, this is reserved for those who are believers in Christ.

Participants discussed why both prayer and labor are required for Christ’s kingdom to come and for His will to be done on earth. The point was made that while God is sovereign over creation, God desires believers participate in discipleship of other believers and the propagation of the gospel through evangelism as the means for bringing about the kingdom of Christ on earth.

Participants seemed to be encouraged that the full consummation of Christ is found in the return of Christ. The point was made by a participant of the relief they feel in participating in kingdom work knowing God is sovereign over creation. The participant mentioned how this brings relief and comfort when they can share the gospel with confidence knowing God will use their work to bring honor to His Name. This realization was perhaps the most outstanding of the session. This participant seemed to grasp the idea that laboring and praying for the kingdom of Christ to come is undeniably compatible with God’s sovereignty over creation. Other comments from participants mentioned *The Baptist Faith and Message*, stating the “full” consummation of Christ, acknowledging that the consummation of Christ’s plan has already been partly realized by Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Statements such as these were greatly encouraging. After prayer, I dismissed the group with their next week’s assignment.

Session 6

“Last Things” was the topic of session 6. Since this tenet is rather short, participants discussed the finer points of the doctrine. Specifically, participants were able

to discuss why it is important to believe God will bring all things to an end both in His own time and in His own way. I emphasized how the doctrine of God's general sovereignty of the entire created order provides a good foundation for God's bringing all things to an end according to His own timeframe and manner. I also emphasized how vital it was to understand God bringing all things to an end in His own appropriate way. God's method of bringing the world to an end will not be inappropriate, untimely, or done in a manner which is not consistent with when and how God desires to end all things.

Participants learned not only that the judgment of all mankind will occur, but furthermore, is rooted in the promises that Christ will in fact, judge mankind. While it may seem obvious that doctrine which is taught in *The Baptist Faith and Message* is based in Scripture, it is important to emphasize the judgment is not something speculative regarding the future, but is explicitly taught in Scripture.

The clear distinction between those who enter both hell and heaven were made clear by asserting the basic truth of biblical teaching of those who place their faith in Christ will spend eternity in heaven with Christ with resurrected and glorified bodies, whereas those who do not will be consigned to hell at the judgment. This tenet seemed consistent with most participants' understanding of last things. Instead of disagreement regarding the particulars of the doctrine, discussion primarily involved clarification regarding the specifics of doctrine such as the function of resurrected bodies, the function of our role in heaven, and what eternal punishment in hell might actually be for unbelievers. After discussion was completed, I gave the next week's assignment and dismissed in prayer.

Session 7

Session 7 focused on the tenet of "Evangelism and Missions." Participants discussed how evangelism and missions were both duty and privilege simultaneously. Making clear that duty and privilege were of equal value was important because it may be reasoned that for something to be either duty or privilege the one aspect would have to be sacrificed. Love for others was discussed as one of the prime motivators for

evangelism and missions behind one's love for God and to see His kingdom come on earth. Participants were made clear that those who participate in evangelism and missions must be regenerate believers in Christ. The potential consequences of sending non-believers onto the mission field through local church missions projects was discussed. The consequences were listed as an inability to accurately communicate the gospel to others, inability to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, and inability to empathize and affirm the purpose for the mission/evangelistic outreach base.

One of the most discussed aspects of this session was in the necessity for those who participate in evangelism and missions to be living a lifestyle which proclaims the message of Christ, in addition to the vocal proclamation of the gospel. Those in attendance did not deemphasize the necessity for vocal proclamation of the gospel, but greatly affirmed the need for both a consistent vocal and lifestyle evangelism strategy among believers.

Finally, participants examined what means are "in harmony" with the gospel when sharing their faith. Evangelism and mission strategies such as music, art, business, writing, and athletics were offered as activities which evangelism and missions could be accomplished and be "in harmony with the gospel of Christ."² Evangelism and missions strategies which are not "in harmony with the gospel of Christ" were listed as participating in drugs or promiscuous behavior in order to reach those within that particular culture and activity. Members offered the seemingly obvious clarification that if the methods one implores invites an individual to participate in sin, it should never be viewed as "in harmony with the gospel of Christ." After discussion was completed, I gave the next week's assignment and dismissed in prayer.

Session 8

The eighth session of the project focused on "Education." I discussed how both

²Ibid., 16.

enlightenment and intelligence were active in the life of the believer and the difference between the two terms. The class concluded that enlightenment was the process by which God illuminates the mind of the believer with knowledge about Him they would not have had otherwise. The class furthermore concluded intelligence, from a Christian educational perspective, was all true knowledge obtained cognitively by God who is the Source of all “sound learning.” It seemed as if the class enjoyed the statement that “all sound learning is, therefore, part of our Christian heritage.”³ I made the comment that knowing all sound learning is part of Christian heritage should give anyone confidence to read, study, and grow in their knowledge of not only God, but the world around them, because God is the Source of all true knowledge. Furthermore, I emphasized when believers learn of science, mathematics, and language they are not learning about those subjects alone, but of the One Who is the originator of those ideas, concepts, and facts. Participants commented how education was “co-ordinate” with missions, and benevolence was primarily due to the necessity of knowing the Scriptures well and having a solid hermeneutical basis for gospel proclamation as well as knowing well how to best love our “neighbor as ourselves” (Lev 19:18). Participants seemed to recognize the necessity for supporting higher education and seminary through the Cooperative Program and sending young people to those institutions for the purpose of ministry training.

Finally, participants discussed academic freedom and academic responsibility in terms of being subject to the preeminence of Christ. A student and/or professor in Christian educational institutions are free to pursue academic pursuits in the effort to promote Christ and His Church, rather than attempting to subvert either. While this might seem limiting one’s academic freedom, participants concluded Christian education should strive and maintain itself as distinctively Christian. If one would choose to divert from using their academic freedom for the good of the church and the kingdom, one might

³Ibid.

need to pursue their endeavor through another non-confessing evangelical institution. The only issue raised was knowing how one interprets if one has strayed from the preeminence of Christ and what it looks like when institutions stray. Also, the effects of Christian institutions in the Southern Baptist Convention during what is commonly known as the “conservative resurgence” were discussed during the session as well as afterward in post-session email exchanges. After discussion was completed, I gave the next week’s assignment and dismissed in prayer.

Session 9

Session 9 dealt with the tenet of “Stewardship.” The topic of stewardship focused on the heart of the giver instead of the possessions themselves as the gauge of whether one is being a faithful steward of their possessions. Participants acknowledged the fact each individual has various levels of talent, possessions, and financial resources; however, the most important aspect of being a faithful steward is being faithful in using whatever means they have to glorify Christ and grow His kingdom. All participants were unanimous in recognizing God as the “source of all things, temporal and spiritual”⁴ and as a result all people owe all they are to Him. Participants discussed whether it is correct that people “owe” all we have back to God when perhaps they did not ask God to provide anything. I illustrated that we can both have a duty and “owe” something to another while still viewing the giving as a “privilege.” Stewardship is both duty and privilege for the believer. I tied missions and evangelism to this tenet when discussing believers’ “spiritual debtorship to the whole world” and how Christians have a “holy trusteeship in the gospel and a binding stewardship in the gospel.”⁵ Not only were possessions viewed as something in which believers are to be proper stewards, but also the gospel is something believers must be proper stewards of for the entire world. This reality seemed

⁴Ibid., 17.

⁵Ibid.

to be revealing for many of the participants stating that most of the time stewardship is primarily viewed as a money, time, possessions and talent issue. Furthermore, believers fulfill the command to love God and their fellow neighbor as themselves through proper stewardship. Believers were encouraged to be a proper steward of what they have been entrusted through the statement that believers “should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others.”⁶

Finally, I discussed each element of stewardship in regard to being a cheerful, regular, systematic, proportionate, and liberal steward of giving. Again, the focus was chiefly placed on a proper heart understanding of how to use one’s possessions, money, talent, time, and propagation of the gospel as the appropriate gauge of stewardship. One of the concluded remarks acknowledged if believers find themselves using their time, money, possessions, talent, and knowledge of the gospel in ways which they know in the heart to be not honoring the Lord, then they must check their heart and realign their priorities back in accordance with Christ. After discussion was completed, I gave the next week’s assignment and dismissed in prayer.

Session 10

The tenth session was on the tenet “Cooperation.” Participants primarily discussed two issues regarding cooperation: how believers in Christ within a Southern Baptist Church should cooperate with sister churches and Southern Baptist entities, and how believers in Southern Baptist Church should cooperate with other denominations. Participants seemed to unanimously agree that cooperation among other churches and among Southern Baptist entities, associations, and conventions was a positive endeavor. I provided elaboration on how Southern Baptist cooperation provided to be positive through programs such as the Cooperative Program. I provided some information on how the Cooperative Program builds the body of Christ through its distribution of funds.

⁶Ibid.

Cooperation between other Southern Baptist churches and entities was accepted with no disagreement or challenge.

I also discussed how Southern Baptist churches are to cooperate with other denominations. When initially stated, cooperation between denominations was unanimously viewed positively. However, when I listed fundamental doctrinal differences between denominations and asked if we can partner with other denominations in terms of mission trips and evangelistic outreaches, the students seemed to reconsider their previous stance on cooperation between other denominations. This deeper consideration of how Southern Baptist churches should cooperate with other denominations reinforced *The Baptist Faith and Message*'s stance where cooperation is "desirable between the various Christians denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament."⁷ The participants agreed that cooperation is a positive aspect when doing such things as humanitarian aid in Christ's name or campaigning to end abortion. However, in matters such as missions and evangelism, remaining within the Southern Baptist denomination would prove more effective and aligned with the convention's statements regarding cooperation. After discussion and question and answer time was completed, I gave the next week's assignment and dismissed in prayer.

Session 11

The eleventh session was on the tenet of the "Christian and the Social Order." Participants discussed the term used in the first session of *The Baptist Faith and Message* regarding Christians' "obligation" to make the will of Christ supreme in life. While the obligation to make the will of Christ supreme in one's own life was accepted, participants wished to discuss why Christians are under obligation to make the will of Christ

⁷Ibid., 18.

supreme in human society and what the will of Christ being supreme in human society means. Issues discussed in terms of Christ's will being supreme in human society was whether or not Christians should attempt to set up a theocracy and whether Christ's will being supreme in human society would, therefore, eliminate the freedom of each person to worship freely in America. Other issues discussed was how something could not be truly or permanently helpful unless it was rooted in the gospel of Christ. I discussed how believers should define "truly" and "permanently" in this context. While agreeing believers should be socially aware and participate in endeavors to ease social issues of society, they must not stop at simply attempting to ease societal issues. Again, I presented the goal of working for the social good as rooted in the greater purpose of making the gospel known to all people and nations.

Furthermore, I spent time discussing the issues of adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. I allowed participants to explain why they believed these three aspects of sexual immortality were specifically addressed. Participants noted they were specifically listed because of their prevalence in society. I listed ways in which each of these practices effect the Christian family structure and how they effect and challenge the church at large. The class also further addressed the issues of theocracy versus democracy when the statement of "how industry, government and society as a whole" can be brought "under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love."⁸ I attempted to clarify this does not mean Christians are not to set up an American theocracy, but instead to vote their conscience, values, and insist on protecting those freedoms. The term "sway" does not mean "dictate," "force," "control" or "mandate." The conclusion on this matter was that to sway and influence society by using one's democratic system is much different than setting up a theocracy where one interpretation of Scripture is utilized and all other dissenting voices are rejected outright. After

⁸Ibid., 19.

discussion and question and answer time was completed, I gave the next week's assignment and dismissed in prayer.

Session 12

The twelfth session covered the topics of "Peace and War" and "Religious Liberty." Participants discussed what it means to be a believer who seeks peace with all people, not just for the sake of peace, but for "righteousness sake." Those in attendance seemed to understand that peace on the part of the believer is not simply an effort to end fighting, but rather, peacemaking is a process believers undertake in order to display the Prince of Peace to the world. While believers "should do all in their power to put an end to war,"⁹ participants noted this does not necessarily advocate a pacifist stance where nations can make means of armies to protect and defend their land and its people from all possible enemies, granted all other diplomatic efforts have been exhausted. I noted the true "remedy for the war-like spirit is the Gospel of our Lord."¹⁰ Participants shared how the war-like spirit does not always have to be contained to the context of official war between nations, but a war-like spirit can also be displayed against any fellow human being and not necessarily be an act of physical violence.

I was pleased to have a number of veterans from wars such as WWII, Korea and Iraq/Afghanistan and servicemen from various branches of the United States armed services in attendance for this discussion. Their attendance and contributions were well-received by both the class and myself. Participants whole-heartedly agreed we should be subject to governing authorities except in the matter in which governing authorities would ask believers to violate/contradict their faith in Christ. Participants and I cited recent cases such as the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling in favor of the Hobby Lobby

⁹Ibid., 20.

¹⁰Ibid.

corporation, as a matter relevant to this statement.¹¹ The statement made by *The Baptist Faith and Message* of church and state remaining separate was a topic discussed at significant length due to many Christians in the United States who reject the idea of the separation, claiming the two should be “one nation under God.” While the statement “one nation under God” is positive, participants discussed what it might look like to have this motto imposed with a faulty interpretation of God or the Scriptures, i.e whose interpretation of Scripture should be held as correct and what denomination should be viewed by the country as “correct.” When I posed these questions, the participants soon saw the country as needing a certain degree of separation between the church and state, especially when the church might be defined by something as general as religious belief which might include Islam, Hinduism, etc. Therefore, participants agreed the state must not officially support any church, denomination, or “ecclesiastical group,” nor should the church depend on or ask the government to carry out its work in order to achieve its ends.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that if the church were taxed, the church, as a paying entity, would have the right to speak into the affairs of the government and could give preference to political candidates and causes. It would imply then, if this were the case, the state would also have the right to direct the actions and behaviors within ecclesiastical groups. The separation of church and state was, therefore, deemed a positive stance, agreeing with *The Baptist Faith and Message* that “a free church in a free state is the Christian ideal.”¹²

Session 13

The final teaching session dealt with the “Family.” This session began with

¹¹Supreme Court of the United States, “Burwell, Secretary of Health and Human Services, v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.,” accessed January 25, 2015, http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/13pdf/13-354_olp1.pdf.

¹²The Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 20.

participants discussing why the family is the “foundational institution of the human society”¹³ as opposed to the church. I asked the participants why the family took prominence over the church as God’s foundational institution. Participants discussed how the family is a microcosm of how the Trinity functions as well as a model for how the church is supposed to function and not the other way around. Participants discussed the different aspects of how a familial relationship is defined by *The Baptist Faith and Message* such as marriage, blood, and adoption. I asked about the family status of those who marry and already have children from past marriages/relationships. The class concluded the holy union of marriage applies to the children of the spouses and are all related and become one family, not simply two sets of children whose parents are married. Participants also discussed how adoption, while not being a relationship based on blood, is nonetheless a family relationship. Participants noted the theme of adoption evidenced in Scripture with the nation of Israel as well as a believer’s adoption in Christ.

The number of participants in a marriage was discussed as being that of one man and one woman. I asked the participants why marriage should be limited to only one man and one woman. Why should a person not be allowed to marry multiple people whom they feel they love? Participants responded that marriage, again, is a reflection of commitment and faithfulness to one person which reflects Christ’s single, faithful, loving devotion expressed to His Church.

Participants also discussed the concept of equal worth and value before God and how that equal worth and value are expressed in the different roles God has ordained for both man and woman. When a male participant expressed their role was to love and provide for the wife, I asked the class if it was perhaps belittling or degrading to think in these terms; and, furthermore, is thinking this way toward women insulting to them by insinuating they cannot provide for themselves. The participants responded to my

¹³Ibid., 21.

hypothetical line of questioning, which was asked in an effort to spawn critical thinking and dialogue, stating it was not degrading simply because of the roles God has gifted for both man and woman. Furthermore, it was noted by a participant that it would greatly depend on the heart of the person. In other words, if the man were to view his job to love and protect from a loving, biblical perspective then it would be a correct expression. However, if the man's expressed desire to be the "leader" and "do everything for her" is motivated from a chauvinistic heart, then God would not honor his intention. Additionally, I pointed out how roles are present within the Trinity who also are coequals in value and worth. Finally, the class agreed with *The Baptist Faith and Message* that the equal value and worth of both men and women are found in the reality of both being made in the Image of God.

Participants also discussed how children are a blessing from God from the moment of conception and are both "blessings" and a "heritage." Christian parents are called to leave a Godly heritage as opposed to an ungodly heritage, which "demonstrates to their children God's pattern for marriage."¹⁴ Participants discussed how parents are the primary instillers of spiritual and moral values upon their children, to which I took an opportunity to clarify the proper role and function of student pastors in the parents' overall effort to spiritually grow and nurture their children through both "lifestyle" and "loving discipline."

Lastly, participants discussed children "honoring and obeying their parents." I asked if this was a commandment which children ever "aged out" of being responsible for following. I asked how we are to "obey" our parents as adults, especially when there might be a disagreement or when a parent is clearly in the wrong or is unfortunately in a diminished mental capacity due to age. Participants noted we are not exempt from this command as adults, however, the way in which adults obey their parents does change.

¹⁴Ibid., 22.

For example, children obey their parents by listening, communicating, loving, and being open to consider their wisdom in certain situations. However, adult children, as opposed to non-adult children, are not under the obligation to follow the command to “obey” one’s parent’s word-for-word as non-adult children are commanded to do.

After a time of question and answer and discussion, I thanked participants for their faithful participation in the study and asked them to read back over their material in preparation for the post-series survey next week. I then closed with prayer.

Concluding Meeting of the Series

The final meeting of the series involved participants taking a post-series survey. This survey was identical to the survey first taken at the beginning of the project.

I gave opening instructions, explained the answer rubric, and provided the sealed and dated envelope of all participants’ codewords. I showed the intact seal as well as the date it was sealed in order to inspire further confidence in the anonymity of their survey responses. The sealed list of codewords proved beneficial as many participants had forgotten their codewords. When a participant needed to be reminded of their codeword, I did not read their codeword to the participant, but instead handed the list to the participant in order to ensure their anonymity. I again informed the participants of their voluntary participation in taking the survey. I thanked the participants for their faithful and consistent participation and were then instructed to begin their pre-series survey. Participants were given at least forty-five minutes to complete their post-series survey. All respondents completed their survey in the allotted timeframe. Participants were instructed to raise their hand and give their survey to me when completed. I placed completed post-series surveys face down on a separate table to ensure their anonymity and hide responses to any answers which might be visible on the top sheet.

When all participants had turned in their post-series survey, I had a time of debriefing. The participants discussed how they felt about the survey and which questions

or topics they thought were challenging. After the debriefing, I concluded the series and dismissed in prayer.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* was designed with the expectation of believers studying Southern Baptist doctrine and thereby growing in their relationship with Christ. Twenty-nine participants completed both a pre- and post-series survey, though many others also participated. Those who participated knew I was teaching a series to fulfill the requirements of this academic project; however, they took the series seriously. More often than not, all participants attended and were engaged in the topic. Some who attended the series voiced that some of the sessions were good reminders of what they knew to be true from God's Word; still others voiced how certain sessions were on topics that challenged preconceived notions and beliefs with overwhelming scriptural support. Other issues similar to this are reviewed in the "Strengths of the Project," "Theological Reflections" and "Personal Reflections" sections of this chapter. This project is evaluated on seven different criteria and concluding remarks are offered.

Evidence of Findings

As to be expected in a study such as the one conducted on *The Baptist Faith and Message*, there were differences in the pre- and post-series data. Some of the data indicated little, or in very few instances, no statistical change whatsoever in the participants' views on given particular doctrine.

There were, however, areas of significant gains and differences between the pre- and post-series means of certain doctrinal statements. Since the pre/post-series evaluated participants' agreement/disagreement of both orthodox and sub-orthodox statements, I will articulate the five most significant areas of doctrinal growth

experienced for both orthodox statements and sub-orthodox statements. The top five statements are based on the percentage of change from the pre- to the post-series survey. As a point of clarity, when I reference a statement number, it is in reference to the corresponding number in the pre/post-series survey.

Orthodox Statements Showing Growth

The orthodox statement which revealed the highest percentage of growth was statement 24: “The primary role of the Holy Spirit is to highlight and glorify Jesus Christ.” This statement revealed a 129 percent increase in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 1). While believers may not have doubted the role of the Holy Spirit in glorifying Jesus Christ, participants may not have realized Scripture teaches the primary function of the Holy Spirit to highlight and glorify Jesus Christ specifically. This dramatic increase should not be viewed as participants not believing the Holy Spirit’s role is to glorify Jesus Christ, but rather participants coming to the realization that the primary role of the Holy Spirit is to glorify and highlight Jesus Christ as opposed to some other function the Holy Spirit may fulfill in the Godhead. Two statements out of the five which were asked on the topic of the Holy Spirit were in the top five in terms of percentage of growth in this study. Therefore, while Southern Baptists may be well-versed in the roles of God the Father and God the Son, Southern Baptist parishioners may have strides to make in their overall understanding of the role and function of the Holy Spirit revealed in Scripture.

The second orthodox statement that revealed the highest percentage of growth was statement 43: “A Baptist church should operate in a democratic manner under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.” This statement revealed a 123 percent increase in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 3). Members may have believed that in a Southern Baptist church pastors are hired in order to run the church and decisions for the entire congregation. While this may be somewhat true, in Southern Baptist churches, pastors are called to provide leadership and example, not to be the primary, sole decision makers for

the entire congregations. The people are the ones who hold the power, not the senior pastor or any member of the pastoral staff. After studying the tenet of “The Church,” participants were encouraged to see the laymen, not pastoral staff, as those who have the power to enact change and be the final decision makers within their local church. Participants may have recognized this aspect of Southern Baptist life previously, but it seems this point was especially driven home by the study and by the evidence of much improved agreement on this issue.

The third orthodox statement which revealed the highest percentage of growth was statement 27: “God created gender when He made both male and female as the crowning work of creation.” The statement revealed a 117 percent increase in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 2). Gender is certainly a tense subject in today’s modern context and culture. My contention for the stark increase of agreement with this doctrine has primarily to do with the connection between male and female and concept of gender. In a Christian context the distinction between male and female versus gender is one in the same; however, from a non-Christian perspective the concept of one’s “gender” can be separated from the physical reality of being genetically male or female. I instructed participants that when God created individuals male and female, that distinction also required a certain and definite gender distinction and role for expression. This, however, does not mean I simply reinforced male/female stereotypes such as men only play sports and women only cook in the kitchen. The distinction of gender was taught regarding how leadership and submission are to look at both genders, how genders are to interact in a marriage and parental scenario, as well as what the differences in gender reflect in the Trinitarian nature of Christ. Again, the primary reason for the dramatic shift in agreement seems to be the reinforcement of God’s original design of gender being attached to God’s design genetically, that being male and female.

The fourth orthodox statement that revealed the highest percentage of growth was statement 25: “The Holy Spirit is the part of the Trinity which calls and draws a

person to Christ.” This statement revealed a 116 percent increase in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 1). I attribute this massive increase of agreement to simply a teaching on the nature and function of the Holy Spirit. As mentioned previously, Southern Baptists seem to have a relatively solid understanding of the Person of Jesus and God the Father; however, it appears Southern Baptists, or at least those surveyed in this project, have a diminished understanding of the role and function of the Holy Spirit in comparison to the other members of the Trinity. It may be that some Southern Baptists attribute a greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s role and function to be too charismatic for their preference, and, in order to avoid appearing charismatic, have not studied the Holy Spirit’s role and function. This particular statement may have increased in agreement after the realization that the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity which enables the believer to hear, process, and respond to the call of Christ in their life. It is the Holy Spirit which opens believers’ spiritual eyes to the truth of the gospel. On the pre-series survey, participants may have not been in full agreement with this tenet mainly because they perceived that it was Christ alone that draws a person to Christ with the reasoning that believers are saved by Christ alone and through faith in Him alone. However, when the role and function of the Holy Spirit was examined in greater detail participants evidently were brought to the understanding that it is, indeed, the Holy Spirit which both calls and draws believers to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

The fifth orthodox statement which revealed the highest percentage of growth was statement 38: “Election should promote humility in the life of the believer.” The statement revealed a 101.4 percent increase in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 2). Election was a doctrine which I proceeded through with a great deal of caution. Many presuppositions surround the doctrine of election and I wanted to ensure some of these presuppositions were corrected, but corrected with a great level of understanding and pastoral care. One such presupposition regarding election which some express when first being exposed to this doctrine of election, is in regard to humility. An assumption

seems to be drawn that if election is true, then the resulting attitude in the heart could lead to elitism or arrogance in those who believe God has set them apart and not others. I addressed this issue straight-forwardly and made the contention that election does not promote elitism or arrogance on the part of the believers, but, in fact should promote the opposite. I attempted to explain how, if election is true, then the believer, in reality, has nothing to be arrogant about at all. If election is true, there is nothing the believer could have done, said, thought, or given which could have earned one's status as a believer. Again, I insisted that if election is true, the ability for a believer to attribute any feelings of arrogance, superiority, or hastiness is unfounded and unbiblical. The instruction made it very clear that the doctrine of election is one of the primary reasons Southern Baptists' claim to quote the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, that salvation is by "grace through faith" and is the free "gift from God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." When participants understood the reasoning behind the doctrine of election and how it should function in the life of the believer, they were in much greater agreement of election promoting humility in the life of the believer as stated in *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

Sub-Orthodox Statements Showing Growth

The sub-orthodox statement that revealed the highest percentage of growth was statement 75: "The academic freedom in Christian school, college, or seminary is not limited by the preeminence of Jesus Christ." This statement revealed an 85.4 percent decrease in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 5). The term "academic freedom" is one which most persons who have been to the university setting greatly prize. In a university, academic freedom is the allowance to pursue any topic anywhere they feel the evidence leads. However, in a university or seminary setting, the "evidence" for any subject has already been revealed through Scripture and, therefore, findings and conclusions (according to *The Baptist Faith and Message*) must perfectly coincide with the revealed Word of God. Participants seemed to overwhelmingly agree that in the

“Christian school, college, or seminary” setting “academic freedom” is “limited by the preeminence of Christ.” In other words, all evidential findings in the “Christian school, college or seminary” setting must coincide with Scripture or their findings are, by nature of disagreement with the inerrant/infallible truth of God’s Word, in error.

The sub-orthodox statement which revealed the second highest percentage was statement 29: “Humans are only sinners when they violate God’s Law. Being a sinner has nothing to do with an inherited sin nature from Adam.” This statement revealed a 64 percent decrease in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 2). I believe this massive shift in theological understanding is due to the idea of being born into sin, as opposed to being a sinner at the point of making a willful choice to transgress God’s law. When Romans 5 was examined on this topic regarding being “born into sin,” the prevailing belief of becoming a sinner at the point of willful committed sin shifted from one which is more biblically-based in the theological understanding of inheriting one’s sin nature from birth. This area of theological understanding was not a difficult idea to shift. Even though it may be rudimentarily understood that a person is a sinner because they do sinful acts, it must be grounded in the idea that a person does sinful acts because they have an inherited sin nature. When an inherited sin nature is understood by participants, the shift from understanding one’s self as a person with sins because of an inherited sin nature as opposed to viewing themselves as being a generally benevolent person who commits sinful acts, is an easy one.

The sub-orthodox statement which revealed the third highest percentage was statement 20: “Trusting Jesus physically rose from the dead is not necessary for salvation; the most important thing is believing He is with God the Father.” This statement revealed a 47.9 percent increase in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 1). Clearly this was not the intended result of this particular statement which should have revealed a decrease in agreement instead of an increase, not to mention such a massive percentage of agreement. As a point of reflection, this statement may have proved slightly confusing

for the participants. Based on participants' scores and assessments of the doctrine of Christ, the majority of participants believe in Christ, His bodily resurrection, and the need to accept the risen Christ as Savior. However, the percentages reveal, at least on paper, that there was an increase in disagreement that one must trust Jesus physically rose from the dead for salvation. This may have proven confusing due to the second part of the statement: "The most important thing is believing He is with God the Father." A participant agreed strongly that the most important aspect of life is "trusting Christ" and trusting Christ at the right hand of God, therefore, did not choose to disagree, or disagree strongly with this statement. A revision of this statement could be "Trusting Jesus physically rose from the dead is not necessary for salvation," which would probably give a more accurate assessment of their theological belief on this issue rather than having to waver through what I meant by coupling the two statements together. When believers agreed in an increasing sub-orthodox manner in the post-series survey it was primarily due to their thinking the most important thing is to trust Christ as God for salvation instead of being attached so heavily to a doctrine which requires belief in a bodily-risen Savior. Certainly one must both believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and that He is at the right hand of the Father and did not teach contrary to this statement. However, again, the wording of this statement appeared to play the biggest role in the results, especially when compared against the overall results of the entire pre/post-series survey results.

The sub-orthodox statement which revealed the fourth highest percentage was statement 35: "There is salvation outside of Jesus Christ only in extreme circumstances such as someone who has never heard the Name of Jesus." This statement revealed a 46.6 percent increase in disagreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 2). I view this increase in Baptist doctrinal understanding one that is very consistent with the biblical teaching of the statement. Those who may be perhaps spiritually sentimental or desirous to have God allow persons into heaven may believe their heart is in the right place when thinking about this issue; however, when viewed in light of Scripture,

salvation is exclusively for those who have committed their lives to Christ. This may appear, as it did to some in the session, as if it is limiting the love of God to a select group of individuals who have only had the privilege of hearing the Name of Christ. However, I encouraged participants to reflect on the purpose, necessity, and reason for doing missions. When the aspect of missions was brought into the discussion, it appeared as if those in attendance began to understand the motivation for why believers participant in missions and evangelism. The more missions and purposeful evangelism was discussed the more it seemed participants agreed with the doctrine contained in this statement. Furthermore, not only did participants begin to agree more regarding this statement in the teaching sessions, but verified their belief by indicating a massive shift in disagreement from the pre/post-series survey on this issue of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ alone for salvation. It should be noted again, how the tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message* relate to one another. For example, the tenet of “Salvation” is very dependent on an accurate understanding of the tenet of “Evangelism and Missions” and vice versa. My failure to teach one of the tenets/doctrines well could have effects in the participants’ poor understanding in other doctrinal areas.

The sub-orthodox statement which revealed the fifth highest percentage was statement 50: “Unbelievers should be allowed to take the Lord’s Supper because it promotes a spirit of inclusion and welcoming on behalf of the Church.” This statement revealed a 39.4 percent increase in agreement from the pre-series survey (see figure 3). Clearly this was not the intended result of this particular statement which should have revealed a decrease in agreement instead of an increase, not to mention such a massive percentage of agreement. I taught believers should only be allowed to partake in the Lord’s Supper. The only reason I can conceive of an increase of agreement with this particular statement was believers, when hearing me reiterate what *The Baptist Faith and Message* states regarding the Lord’s Supper, found the tenet too harsh and not inclusive enough for those who may not be believers, but are seeking to understand the Bible or

aspects of the Christian faith. Some participants may have found, while refusing to serve unbelievers the Lord's Supper may be the most biblical position, that putting it into practice may alienate certain persons who may be "seekers" or those interested in coming to Christ. While this is obviously an unbiblical position and was made clear regarding the Bible's teaching on the prerequisites of the Lord's Supper during the teaching sessions, some participants simply chose to agree that unbelievers should be allowed to partake in the Lord's Supper nonetheless. The other possible explanation for this massive shift in understanding was a quick reading of the statement. Participants may have thought the statement was "unbelievers should not be allowed. . . ." However, this may be unlikely, and I cannot determine another possible reason for the increase in agreement in this statement other than (1) participants simply not agreeing with Scripture (and *The Baptist Faith and Message*) on this tenet or (2) not reading the statement correctly.

Summary

Overall, the tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message* accomplished what I set out to accomplish. The tenets which were supposed to show a measurable increase, for the majority, accomplished that purpose. Out of the 74 orthodox statements in the pre/post-series survey, 13 statements showed a decreased level of agreement instead of an increased level of agreement. Therefore, 82.5 percent of the orthodox statements indicated an increase in understanding of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, as intended.

The sub-orthodox questions, however, were more questionable in their results. Out of the 31 statements in the pre/post-series survey, 10 of those statements returned an average which increased their level of agreement instead of decreasing their level of agreement. Therefore, 67.75 percent of the sub-orthodox statement indicated correct or neutral results on the pre/post-series survey.

The sub-orthodox statements did the intended job of causing the participant to stop and reflect over their answer before they were given; however, when participants stopped to consider their answer they may have "over-thought" or fixated on a word

which they felt changed the meaning of the statement and, therefore, answered in a manner causing them to agree with the sub-orthodox statement instead of disagree. As mentioned, however, 19 of the sub-orthodox questions garnered results which I desired with 2 of the remaining statements indicating no change from the pre/post-series survey. Therefore, the majority of the time, the sub-orthodox questions had their intended effect and gave the intended result. If I were to make adjustments to the sub-orthodox questions which I felt may have been confusing to some participants, I am confident the outcome would have resulted in even more levels of disagreement with the sub-orthodox tenets.

While I wanted a greater percentage of statements that agree with orthodox questions and disagreed with sub-orthodox from the pre- to the post-series survey, there was an overall correct shift in understanding of Southern Baptist doctrine contained in *The Baptist Faith and Message* based on the results of the pre/post-series survey.

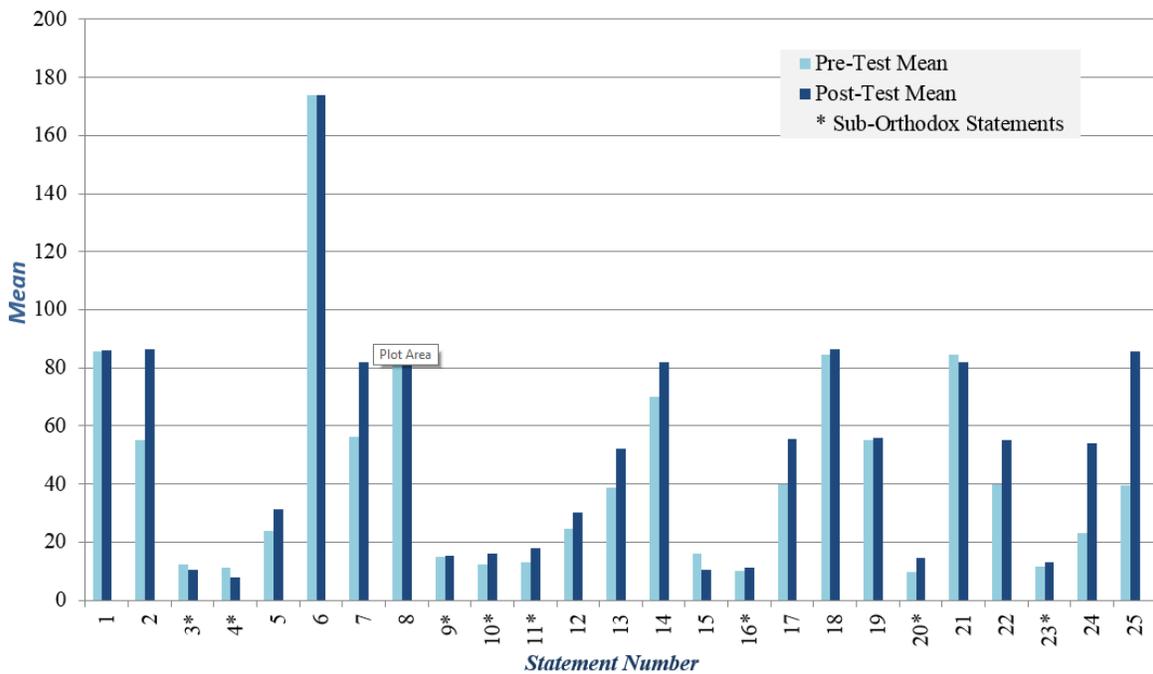


Figure 1. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 1-25

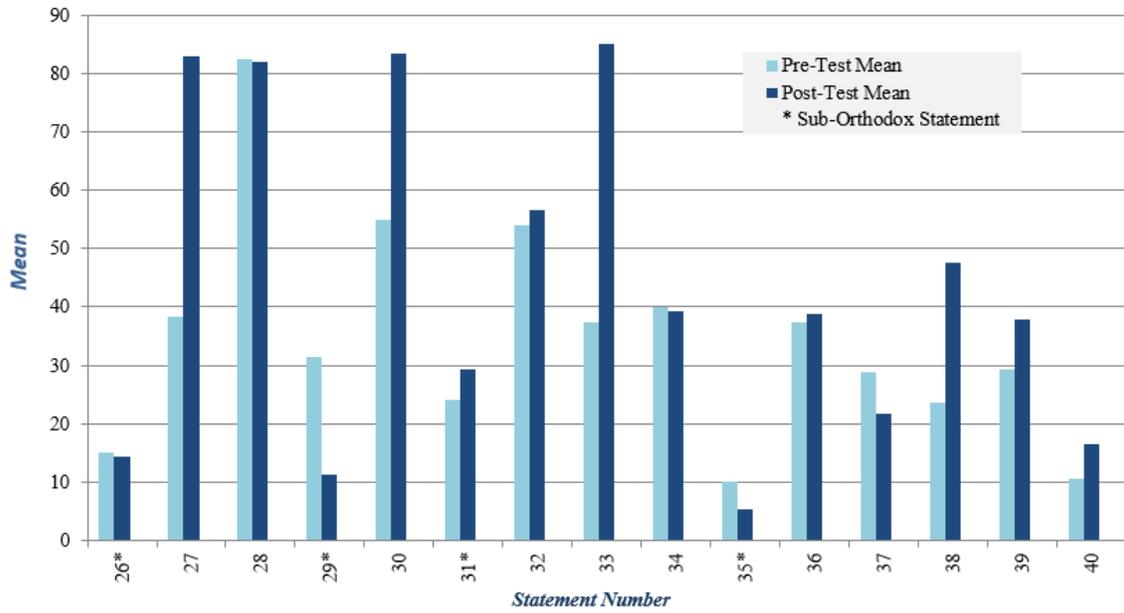


Figure 2. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 26-40

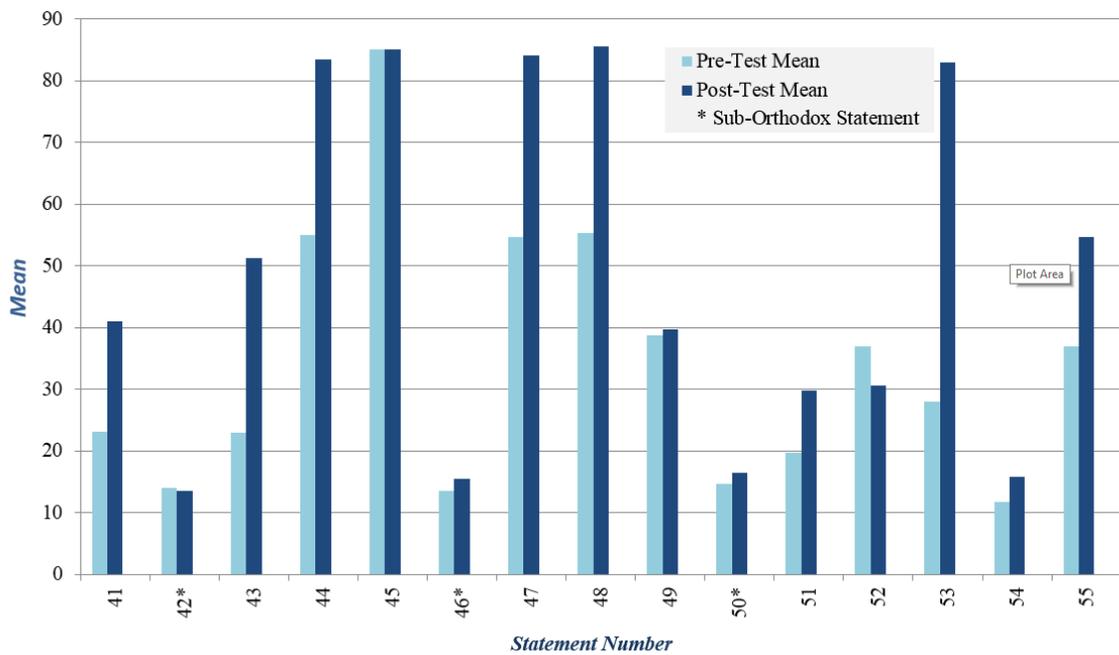


Figure 3. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 41-55

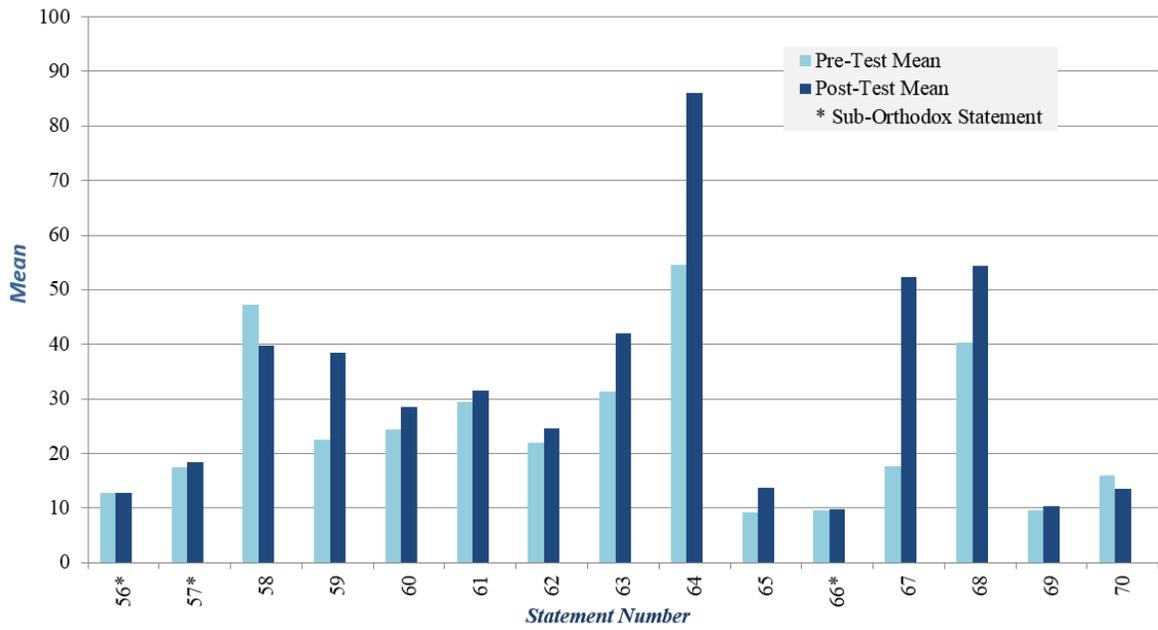


Figure 4. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 56-70

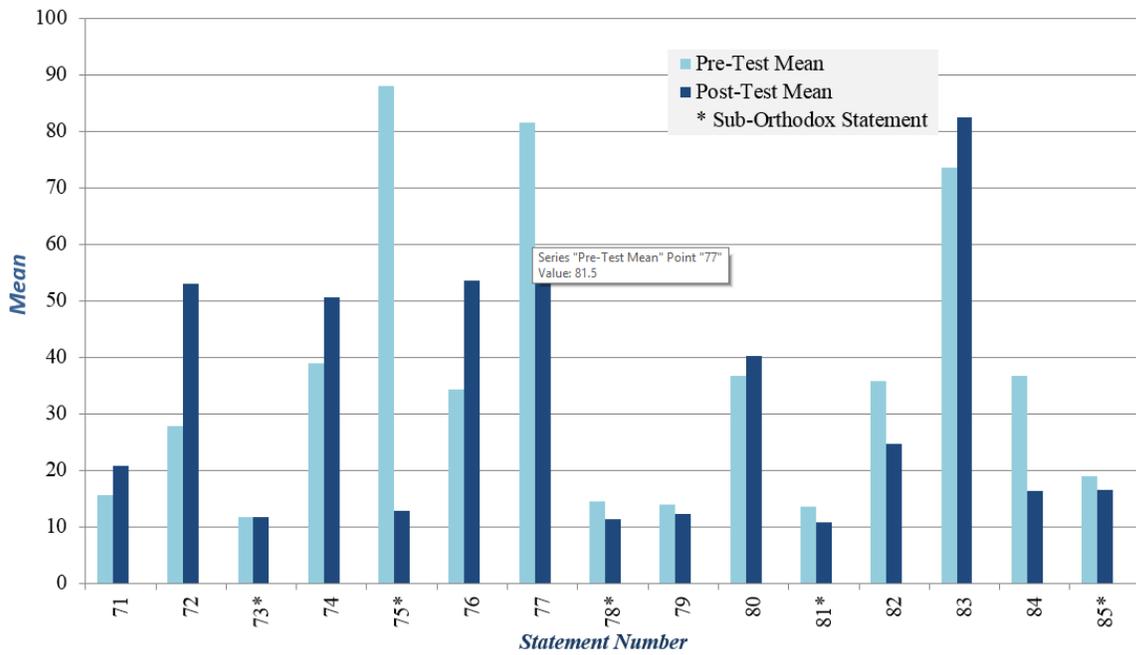


Figure 5. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 71-85

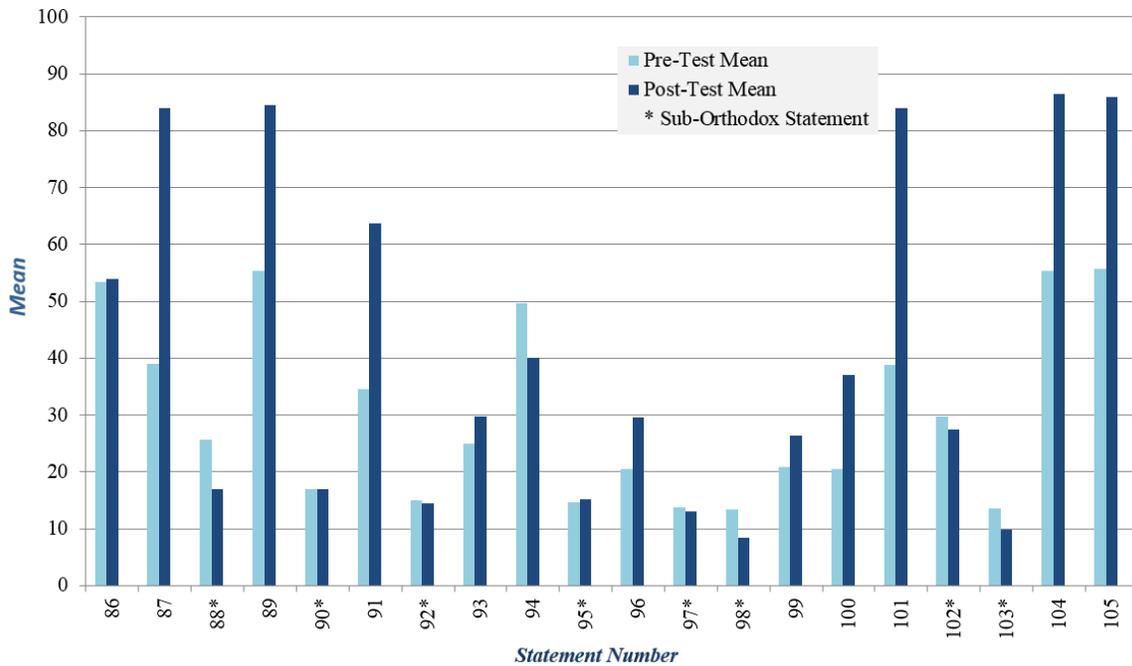


Figure 6. Pre/post-series survey mean responses 86-105

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and teach a thirteen-week curriculum on *The Baptist Faith and Message* among a core group of adults at Highland Baptist Church, Tullahoma, Tennessee.

This purpose was accomplished by developing the curriculum (see appendix 4). The curriculum itself was spiral bound with all sessions included in the workbook. The curriculum workbook included a cover page with the series title. Inside the curriculum workbook was a table of contents listing every topic/tenet with its corresponding page number. After the table of contents, the curriculum workbook gave an introduction to the study which provided each participant an outline of how the sessions were structured, an estimated time outline for how long the sessions would take to accomplish, and an outline on how the workbook could be used on a daily basis. The introduction concluded with an emphasis to contact me if further clarification was needed. I was clear to emphasize the need to come to each session; but also, in order to benefit most from the series, one should complete the curriculum before coming to each session.

Each session of the curriculum workbook included a title of what the participant would study (i.e., Article I: The Scriptures); under the title was “The Main Point,” or the main focus each participant should glean from the session. Next, the workbook listed the scriptural support for each tenet and an introduction to the tenet. In order for the student to engage in the curriculum, the curriculum quotes *The Baptist Faith and Message* and asks a series of questions (most of the time, two questions would be asked) based on the statement. Each question was followed by three lines for participants to journal their answer under the statement and have them ready for class. At the conclusion of each session in the workbook, two application questions were asked based on the material in the chapter. The final page of each chapter provided participants with a “Notes, Questions and Reflections” page for use during the week or for in-class discussion. Each tenet in the curriculum workbook was identical in this format.

Even though the curriculum workbook and a small copy of *The Baptist Faith and Message* were provided to each participant, I provided a copy inside the curriculum workbook itself for ease of access and for anyone who may have misplaced their copy of the document.

The material for delivering the content of the series was identical to the curriculum workbook, but with the following differences: (1) my copy did not have lines under each question for journaling; (2) at the end of each session, notations were made for items to be covered at the end of the session such as question and answer time, assigning next week’s objectives and prayer/dismissal, and (3) instead of listing “The Main Point” in the teaching curriculum, I titled this section “Learning Objective.”

The purpose of teaching the curriculum was met by having each session at 5 p.m. in the Youth Department of Highland Baptist Church. Each session lasted one hour and consisted of recording each session for placement on the church’s webpage for viewing by those who were not able to physically attend the session, prayer at the beginning, and teaching the curriculum. The first session included a short keynote

presentation which outlined the purpose of the series, what participants would be engaging, as well as administering the pre-series survey. I told participants when filling out their pre-series survey that my intent was to capture their honest belief about the statement, whatever it may be. I reassured them of their anonymity by the use of a self-assigned codeword. When participants were finished, I asked them to lay their survey face down on a table at the front of the class. After all participants were finished, the class dismissed in prayer.

Teaching the curriculum for the next thirteen weeks involved asking the questions which were listed in the curriculum workbook, as well as allowing time for both myself and those in attendance to discuss and dissect the words used in *The Baptist Faith and Message* and draw conclusions on their meaning for both the church and one's personal discipleship and sanctification. Even though there was a specific time for questions and answers, I was clear to the group that participants were allowed to make suggestions and ask questions whenever they felt the need as to alleviate any possible confusion to their understanding of the discussion.

The final session involved taking the post-series survey which was identical to the process involved in taking the pre-series survey. The only difference was that I opened the sealed envelope with all the codewords for anyone who may have forgotten their self-assigned codeword from their pre-series survey. After all participants took the post-series survey and there was no longer a need for the codeword grid, the document was destroyed to maintain anonymity for everyone involved.

The main objective of the core group at Highland Baptist Church was accomplished by teaching the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* to a group of individuals who signed up and completed both surveys. While the series was open to whomever wished to attend, only participants who attended and completed both pre/post-series surveys are documented in the final survey results. The final count of those who met this requirement was 29 individuals.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The first goal of the project was to assess members' current understanding of Southern Baptist doctrines contained in *The Baptist Faith and Message*. This assessment indicated which areas participants understood well and areas which needed the strongest emphasis in teaching. This goal was measured by administering a survey to determine each subject's knowledge of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The goal was to be deemed a success when 20 participants completed the pre-series survey and the data analyzed provided a clear understanding of participants' current knowledge.

This first goal was met and exceeded by administering the pre-series survey to 40 participants, 29 of whom attended the sessions and completed a post-series survey, which exceeded the previously stated goal of 20 participants. The identical pre/post-series survey included 105 statements of agreement based on *The Baptist Faith and Message* and was assessed by their level of agreement of each statement based on a six-level rubric: "strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, agree slightly, agree, and strongly agree. The rubric point value was "strongly disagree" worth 1 point to "strongly agree" worth 6 points (see appendix 2).

The second goal of the project was to develop a thirteen-week curriculum on the doctrinal tenets presented in *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The goal was deemed successful by developing the teacher's curriculum as well as a student workbook curriculum (see appendices 4 and 5). Furthermore, the second goal was deemed successful by utilizing a curriculum evaluation rubric and an expert panel of individuals, who have attained at least a Master's level degree from a Southern Baptist theological seminary, who assessed the theological accuracy and consistency with Baptist belief and educational credibility (see appendix 3). This aspect of the goal was deemed successful because the evaluation by the members of the expert panel yielded above 95 percent of the review components at sufficient or above levels.

The third goal of this project was to increase the participants' knowledge of *The Baptist Faith and Message* through teaching a thirteen-week study to a core group of

adults using the aforementioned curriculum on *The Baptist Faith and Message*. This goal was measured by a pre-series survey which was administered during the first session and a post-series survey during the last session. The goal was deemed successful as the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre/post-series survey scores (see appendix 2).

Furthermore, I would like to take note on the increased knowledge on the part of the participants on the sub-orthodox questions. Statements which were deemed sub-orthodox (statements marked with an asterisk in appendix 2) were designed for the purpose of eliciting critical thinking on the part of the participants. On certain sub-orthodox questions, some participants seemed to indicate an increased agreement. I did not intentionally seek to present any material which would make participants further agree with any sub-orthodox statements. Therefore, I was puzzled to find there were occasional cases of increased agreement with sub-orthodox statements rather than disagreement.

I have considered why an increased agreement in the averages on certain sub-orthodox statements was evident and has arrived at two conclusions. The first conclusion is that, perhaps after studying and reflecting upon a certain doctrine or tenet and hearing it taught and explained, the participant decided they may not disagree with the tenet as much as they had previously. This does not mean they completely agree with the sub-orthodox statement outright (moving from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”); but instead, moved in a more agreeable manner toward the sub-orthodox statement. Granted, this was not supposed to occur and, again, I did not teach for agreement in these areas; however, factors such as a person’s upbringing, presuppositions about God, the church, Scripture, as well as a person’s personal spiritual level of discipleship, could possibly be contributing factors indicating a negative shift toward disagreement when the certain doctrines/tenets were more fully explained.

The second conclusion explains participants’ greater agreement to sub-

orthodox statements being a result of the post-series survey. While I clearly instructed the participants to be careful readers of each statement and take their time during the post-series survey, the participants possibly either did not carefully read their statements and answered based on the first couple words of the statement, or they may have been in a hurry to finish the quiz due to the length of the post-series survey. Participants who did not read questions fully may have read an orthodox statement, but missed words/phrases which changed the entire context of the statement making the statement sub-orthodox.

I would advise future instructors of this series to make sub-orthodox statements more obvious and not contingent on one word deviations from an orthodox statement. The reason a statement was deemed “sub-orthodox” in the pre/post-series survey is because it is intentionally contradictory to Scripture. For example, statement 15 is obviously contradictory to Scripture. A sub-orthodox in the pre/post-series survey can also be a statement which initially could be understood as a normal orthodox statement, but with slight changes in phrasing and conclusions, can change its meaning into a statement which does not agree with witness of Scripture. For example, statement 3 in pre/post-series survey would qualify as this type of statement. While it is true and orthodox that “God inspired Scripture and was written by men” it does not mean, however, because Scripture was “written by men” it is “therefore, subject to having slight errors in history, dates, events, etc.” It would be my contention to stick to straightforward statements which are clearly sub-orthodox versus statements in which one word might change the context of an orthodox statement making it sub-orthodox, such as in statements 9 and 10 in the pre/post-series survey.

The seemingly internal feeling of the participant to finish the survey quickly is more difficult to correct. The only option to correct the issue may be to shorten the survey significantly, as well as consistently reminding participants to take their time and reminding them of the potential for deceptive wording of the statements.

Strengths of the Project

While the study of God's Word alone is most beneficial to the church, there are many benefits of studying what Southern Baptists claim to believe theologically about the Scriptures. A study which synthesizes the Bible's teaching into categories which believers can examine, reflect, and study provides them with an accessible tool by which to study God's Word and the doctrine which is extrapolated. There are many benefits gained from conducting a series such as the one being discussed in one's local church.

It would prove beneficial for the leader/pastor in a Southern Baptist Church to take members through a study on *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The members may have a rudimentary understanding of what Southern Baptists claim to believe and have not taken the time to study the doctrine in a formal manner. This circumstance would be especially true if previous pastoral regimes did not emphasize theological teaching, or the pastor perhaps was operating from a different mindset than that of the Southern Baptist Convention at large. While it seems most Southern Baptist congregants have a rudimentary understanding of the Southern Baptist doctrine, it would prove beneficial to sharpen their understanding and gain greater insight into what the Bible teaches on particular topics. Likewise, it would also prove beneficial to congregants who were not raised in a Southern Baptist church or who came to faith later in life. The fact that this project provides believers with a strong foundation for adults within one's local church is one of the strengths.

Another strength of this project is the basis on which it is founded is extremely strong. The study is laden with Scripture and calls those who participate to draw their conclusions of *The Baptist Faith and Message* from the Scripture itself. The strength of the study is also found in its ability to allow Scripture to speak for itself on the topics. Since all the statements in *The Baptist Faith and Message* are rooted in Scripture, it should cause all persons involved to conduct a spiritual inventory of what they really believe on certain doctrines. A result of the study may be a greater understanding and appreciation for the doctrine's importance in one's life. However, participants might also

recognize after studying a certain tenet, that they do not agree with it as much as they had before. A participant should not, in theory, disagree more with a tenet after they have examined *The Baptist Faith and Message*, but it seems that this result may occur. This point of knowing which area of Baptist doctrine his congregants struggle to agree or understand, could be viewed as positive by a pastor.

As mentioned, a strength of the study is the ability to cause believers to reflect upon what they truly believe on issues. Greater study may provide believers who believed in a certain doctrine, but did not know exactly why, a justification and apologetic for their previously held belief. It also serves as an aid to connect different doctrinal beliefs together in a much stronger fashion. For example, if believers (or even perhaps an unbeliever attending the study) come to a greater knowledge and understanding regarding Article I: The Scriptures, it might cause them, therefore, to take with greater seriousness the claims of the deity of Christ, or what the Scriptures and *The Baptist Faith and Message* claim regarding evangelism and missions, education, or stewardship (Articles XI-XIII).

Finally, one of the greatest strengths of the project was how it covered the entire *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Those who attended all sessions had to read, study, examine, discuss, and reflect upon every word and Scripture passage in the entire document. Those who attended the study should know full well what *The Baptist Faith and Message* does and does not say and the context in which each doctrine/tenet was written. The study did not pick and choose which doctrine to study or which doctrines to emphasize more than other and are all presented in the same format in the teacher's curriculum and the student workbook.

The strengths of this study are an increased knowledge and understanding of Scripture and *The Baptist Faith and Message* doctrinal assertions, its usefulness as an aid in finding areas of struggle in congregational doctrinal understanding, granting scriptural fidelity, furnishing a greater apologetic for engaged believers, and a tool which can

provide a “ripple effect” where a positive knowledge and understanding of doctrine influences a participant’s belief in other doctrines.

Weaknesses of the Project

While there are strengths to this project which lead believers to a greater knowledge and understanding of God and the doctrinal tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, there are certainly weaknesses of the project which seem difficult to resolve.

The first weakness of the project was having everyone attend all the sessions in person. While there was an allowance for absenteeism via the availability to watch the sessions online, I believe this also provided participants a feeling of not having to be physically present at all the sessions as indicated in the Research Methodology section and, therefore, attend in person sporadically. While this was not the norm in this project across the board, it could be seen as occurring in certain circumstances. A person was free to watch the online sessions of the series, but there was no method of checking to ensure whether the person had actually watched the online session when absent. This could be a weakness because they may have missed out entirely on the content of the particular session they failed to attend and watch online. Again, this was not the case with all absent participants. In fact, many participants spoke with me regarding its usefulness in their particular absence. However, when a person fails to attend both the in-person teaching session as well as the online session, it does not prove useful for the growth in knowing and understanding that particular doctrine. A possible remedy for this situation is requiring a certain number of sessions in which participants must attend in person in order to reduce the possibility of participants failing to watch the online sessions.

Another weakness would be the nature of the curriculum workbook. In a similar vein as the online sessions, other than checking everyone’s workbook as they entered class, there was no method in place for checking to see whether they completed the week’s curriculum work. Even though the content was covered in class, the workbook provided participants a way of personal expression, journaling, and a venue to

privately articulate what they felt they had learned and benefited from in any particular session. Furthermore, the workbook provided space and asked questions in such a way as to elicit questions and spur further, deeper discussion in the classroom setting. Many participants utilized the workbook; however, it was evident toward the end of the session, even though I often referenced the workbook, that some participants were not completing the workbook as instructed. I desired the series to be more than lecture-based learning; in particular, I desired a series where participants read, thought, studied, and expressed what they felt about the content, and then later had the opportunity to express that growth in the classroom setting.

Another weakness was the content versus time allotment for the class. Frequently, I found myself saying how many more sessions could be spent discussing certain phrases and topics found in one particular tenet of doctrine. Even though participants were able to understand the gist of what was being discussed, certainly there could have been much more said about certain doctrines in which there unfortunately was not enough time left to cover. The desire to continue discussion was not simply a desire to exhaustively cover every possible angle of a doctrine, but instead was based on participants' desires to discuss deeper and with greater detail some of the issues inherent in particular doctrines. Many doctrines and terms within those doctrines were quite new to some participants and I believe perhaps a greater variance in some pre/post-series survey answers could have been made if the series did not have a strict time/date allotment.

Finally, even though this may not necessarily be a weaknesses of the project, but instead a reflection of the nature of the population of those whom ministers serve, striking a balance in teaching people with various theological backgrounds (i.e., previous denominational experiences) and levels of theological understanding was challenging. Obviously, all members of a local denomination were not raised Southern Baptist or were not Christians from a young age. Some participants had experiences in other

denominations and theological systems and others were young Christians wanting to know more about the Christian faith and the Southern Baptist denominational belief structure. Certain participants had little biblical knowledge, or at least would not be able to articulate their biblical knowledge, whereas others were very theologically grounded and had certain opinions and presuppositions regarding the content of *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

I found it difficult to find the balance between teaching those to whom this information was fresh and new and teaching in a way which grew those who were of greater biblical/theological/denominational understanding. The way I attempted to find this balance was being very clear about this imbalance at the onset, letting people know we are all in different places and that patience with another's current level of discipleship should be evident in discussion. I assumed the class did not know anything when it came to theological terms (such as omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.); therefore, when those terms were defined, I asked probing questions regarding those words/statements so as to draw those who were of greater knowledge/understanding into the discussions. Perhaps providing or suggesting participants purchase a theological glossary and/or dictionary would help in better remedying this issue.

Again, while there are great benefits and strengths to this particular project, I feel the weaknesses in its implementation were ensuring all attended or watched the online session in their absence, ensuring participants completed their curriculum workbook, the difficulty of exhaustively covering each topic satisfactorily, and teaching people who are at different levels of biblical/theological/denominational understanding.

What I Would Have Done Differently

No particular study is perfect, and every project has things it could change. Realizing this fact, next are a few aspects I would change about how I would conduct the project.

The most obvious aspect of change would be adjusting the time constraint

within which each session was taught. I realize a session cannot last for a prolonged period of time; however, one of the best aspects of change for this project would be a greater allotment of time in the classroom in order to thoroughly address each topic. If a longer time allotment is not possible, perhaps extending the number of sessions in the series would prove beneficial for the student's understanding of each doctrinal tenet. With a longer session time, I could better address both the doctrine itself, as well as the questions and contributions of the participants. Again, most sessions would be difficult in a time allotment greater than an hour; therefore, the best change would be to give each doctrinal tenet, at minimum, a one-hour time slot and perhaps address each topic in more than one session. One to three sessions might prove more effective rather than covering each doctrinal tenet in only one session. If one were to do this session in their local church, perhaps covering the entire document in a six-month or one-year study would prove ideal.

Additional age modifications might prove to be a unique change for this series. Younger adult students would perhaps benefit from a separate series which could address the doctrinal tenets in a manner that is culturally appropriate for their age range. Similarly, adults, primarily senior adults might benefit from a series which emphasizes more discussion with a longer format in which to absorb the information. Making the sessions more appropriate for all ages is something which would prove beneficial for the outcome of the study. If an instructor does not feel as if age-graded instruction is needed, the instructor should feel free to extend their time on task in one of the ways suggested.

Third, being able to have sessions structured in such a way that the instructor can cover the material in the session time would be beneficial to the outcome the study. When the instructor is covering material in which people are free to ask questions and make clarifying statements it can significantly reduce the time it takes to get through the material. Many times a person's questions and issues would have resolved themselves if they would have listened to the entire lecture instead of needing to work out a personal

issue within a particular doctrine. Perhaps what would work better for someone doing this study in the future is regulating questions and statements to a specific time at the end of the course, unless absolutely necessary. While I felt an open teaching environment for questions and statements on the part of those participating was a positive aspect of the study (most of the time it did prove beneficial), on certain doctrines with a wide range of personal belief and potential controversy (i.e., Articles V and VII), it may have been best to hold all statements and questions for a time at the end in order for me to say what needs to be said and minimize tangents and distractions.

Finally, the last aspect of the project I would change would be the nature of the survey. The pre/post-series survey involved a battery of 105 questions regarding *The Baptist Faith and Message*. While a student in theology may take this survey, have little trouble with the statements, and may consider it as rather rudimentary, the majority of the lay participants did not seem to have such ease with the survey. It was noticed both in the pre- and post-series survey time that people become tired of the survey. This may have led to answers given in which the participant did not read the statement accurately and simply wanted to finish the document. The pre/post-series survey, while necessary for the academic portion of the project, could be greatly condensed if given in a setting in which the results were non-academic in nature.

Furthermore, in regard to the survey, I would have considered the nature of the sub-orthodox questions which were asked. When I asked a sub-orthodox question, the question needed to reflect a clearer, obvious heretical statement where a person did not have to notice a one-word variant which changed the orthodoxy of the particular statement. For instance, question 9 in the survey, “God is *omnipotent*, meaning God is all-powerful, except when human beings act outside his will,” contains the orthodox statement, “God is *omnipotent*, meaning God is all-powerful,” yet coupled with the statement “except when human beings act outside his will,” makes the entire statement sub-orthodox. Without a careful reading, participants may have answered in a way

inconsistent with their actual beliefs on this doctrinal statement. Perhaps a better way to ask question 9 would have been, “When human beings act outside God’s will it negates God’s omnipotence.”

I took a great deal of effort in attempting a perfect survey, method, and teaching of the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*; however, as noted no study is perfect, and every project could be altered. Therefore, after completion of the project, if I or another person wished to duplicate this particular project, I would suggest an expansion of the time/meeting schedule with participants; perhaps make age allowances for the different adult ages which might wish to participate, and perhaps a culturally appropriate student ministry level study for adolescents; allow questions and discussion at the end of the teaching time, or at least greatly reduce the amount of discussion/questions during the lesson, especially during difficult, potential controversial doctrines; and, finally, make adjustments to the pre/post-series survey.

Theological Reflections

In the course of writing and implementing this project, I have gained certain theological reflections on the nature of doctrine and the role it plays in the life of a church and the people who embody the church at large.

While teaching the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*, I had assumptions based on being a Southern Baptist my entire life and being familiar with this document, both in previous versions and in its current form. One of the assumptions I held was that the participants would understand the document in a similar manner in which I understood it. With my past experience and presuppositions, I believed participants would understand this document as man-made document which attempted to best synthesize biblical doctrine into an accessible format for Southern Baptist churches. While I believe this is true to a certain degree, I witnessed some participants at times attempt to understand this document as they might attempt to understand Scripture. I believe there may have been a slight fear on the part of some participants that to disagree with certain

tenets of *The Baptist Faith and Message* would make them argumentative or subversive against the Southern Baptist Convention.

While I believe certain tenets can be almost heretical to argue against from a biblical standpoint, such as the nature of Scripture, God, The Son and the Holy Spirit, I had to remind the participants at times that doctrine, as wonderful a servant of the church as it can be, is not our Master. While instructing participants on *The Baptist Faith and Message*, I frequently emphasized doctrine serving as a tool to help believers interpret, process, and understand the inerrant and infallible Scripture. I was reminded of how believers must ultimately find their foundation in Scripture alone and not a particular theological system, creed, or statement. Theological systems, creeds, and statements are useful in their proper place, yet damaging when elevated to a position which is viewed on par with Scripture. While doctrine is hopefully written prayerfully, trusting Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is not God-breathed and therefore, is susceptible to human flaw and influence and remains only a best attempt to synthesize biblical teaching for our benefit and growth in Christ. This reality has deepened my desire to rely more heavily upon Scripture and His Word in order to best filter theological doctrines, systems, creeds, and statements in which I choose to adhere.

While theologically it is a flawed attempt to synthesize biblical teaching, it is in no manner useless for the body of Christ. Correct doctrinal understanding aids believers in knowing and understanding Scripture more completely, as well as shaping an overarching narrative of the message and purpose of Scripture. In teaching the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*, the participants in attendance had a desire to know and understand God in a much deeper and fulfilling way. The participants' desires to know doctrine was a reflection of their desire to know God better by studying and reflecting over what other intelligent, thoughtful believers had written, reflected, and synthesized into theological doctrine. Doctrine aids the believer in providing a further "cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1) from which believers can know and understand Scripture, and

thereby, know and understand Christ better. Other than possibly a few instances over the course of fifteen weeks, I did not encounter individuals who raised objections or made statements from a desire to be purposefully rude or antagonistic, but rather to gain clarification in order to know and understand more fully. In those few cases in which it seemed the questions and statements did not come from a pure place, I believe the document and the participant's theological presuppositions were at odds. In situations such as this, the potential for confusion and anger are always present; however, I was quick to emphasize I was not calling people to an adherence of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, but rather to the Scriptures and the Christ to Whom the document is attempting to highlight and glorify.

As the survey results noted, certain doctrines showed a certain amount of variance and growth; however, for the most part most participants seemed relatively similar in their beliefs pre and post the series. This does not mean, however, that there was not a difference made. In some cases one might tend to agree *more* or *less* with a doctrine than they may have before. However, in terms of stark differences between the pre and post-series survey, the results did not indicate a massive shift across the board in terms of participants' theological worldview. This is probably because most participants were raised in churches with teachers who probably affirmed and/or denounced most of the tenets that corresponded with the pre/post-series survey. While members who participated experienced moderate/liberal preaching for twenty years, it did not seem to negate entirely the influence of theologically conservative family members and small group experiences within the local church context.

The results, which garnered minimal extreme variances, can be a positive aspect of the series; after all, the series was taught from a conservative theological viewpoint. This could reveal, perhaps, that participants' theological worldviews were relatively set and not going to be influenced by outside factors (which is positive in the instance of an individual wishing to persuade them to an unbiblical stance or toward a

different faith). The results, however, should be noted by those who work with young people. The setting of beliefs and worldview is not only a theological phenomenon, but rather can be true across the board with all forms of knowledge, understanding, and belief. The church must recognize while beliefs can certainly change and be adjusted as students are presented with the true nature of a subject, the likelihood of a massive shift in belief is not often the norm. For this reason, the church should invest more than ever into their children's and students' theological education and shift perceptions of what is valuable in a children/student ministry from a view which many times emphasizes a Christian version of recreation and relationship building, to one that has an element of those things, but is, also, driven by the main goal of students knowing and understanding Him. This process is certainly culturally appropriate for children and students, but is undeniable and unapologetically theologically driven.

As stated, doctrine is a wonderful servant to the church, but it is a disastrous Master. Doctrine, by itself, can prove to be a very dry, cold subject without the applicational reality brought about by its theological assertions and conclusions. At the end of each session when the application points were made, which were drawn from a particular week's doctrine, the participants seemed to have a deeper, more profound agreement with the application. When the academic, mental discipline of theology was met with the practical application of the topic, many who were in attendance seemed significantly strengthened in their walk with Christ. Often participants commented on how they "always knew, but never really understood" the reason for a certain doctrine "until now." Many participants mentioned how the "light bulb came on and now I know why I believe the way I do." I found many participants were not being informed or exposed to a certain belief/doctrine for the first time, but rather, came to a greater understanding of the "why" of what they believed. One female participant commented on how this doctrine now has "hands and feet" in her life. I learned how theology and doctrine, as wonderful an endeavor as it is, requires a practical application element in the

life of believers in order for it to truly affect the person's heart and bring about transformative life change. One participant compared the study of doctrine to cooking food in the respect that "if one just read the recipe book it would give you plenty of knowledge, but you can only really be fed if you take what it says and make something with it." I believe this realization by the participants was a great connection of understanding the true reason for and purpose of knowing and understanding doctrine.

Finally, I realized doctrine is a fantastic, wonderful gift God has allowed His church to pursue. The ability to reflect, reason, articulate, and write and synthesize the inferences and assumptions about Scripture in theological systems, creeds, and statements can be, if done in the power of the Holy Spirit, a wonderful edifying aspect of Christian sanctification. Doctrine is a reflection of mutual striving to bolster one another in Christ, of working alongside other believers in the common pursuit of knowing and understanding (Jer 9:23-24) God in a greater way than any one believer could do on his or her own. The church should be thankful for doctrine; it aids believers in knowing how and what to believe and, in some cases, reveals the faults in thinking when theology is incorrect. Incorrect theology sharpens believers in formulating correct theology by exposing reasoning which is counterintuitive to the gospel and the overarching narrative of Scripture.

Throughout the course of the study on *The Baptist Faith and Message*, my theological reflections revealed how doctrine is humanity's flawed effort to synthesize what is perfect, that most believers truly have a desire to know and understand God better and theology helps believers grow in that pursuit. I have also come to understand that adults are relatively consistent in their theological viewpoints. Even though there might be small variances, large shifts in theological understanding are often rare. Therefore, accurate theological training and upbringing by parents chiefly, and pastor and leaders, are indispensable. As edifying as theology is, doctrine without application can be a cold, dry spiritual pursuit. However, when application and theology meet, the benefit of

studying and reflecting upon doctrine can pay untold dividends to the church of Jesus Christ.

Personal Reflections

I grew as a teacher and pastor in a few distinct ways. Not only did the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* seem beneficial to those who attended, but I learned certain realities about the ministry of teaching that I may not have otherwise realized as quickly.

I came to a deeper understanding of the need and role of doctrine in the life of the believer. Again, when persons study *The Baptist Faith and Message*, or any other theological document, they are attempting to process an attempted synthesis of biblical teaching. In both the layman's and pastor's life, certain specific syntheses are needed for the purpose of ordering one's thoughts and lives. Doctrine is needed, especially when believers engage with other believers or nonbelievers on any given topic on which the Bible teaches. While it is important to read the Bible as a whole work from Genesis to Revelation, the importance of knowing how the Bible teaches seems to be consistent across its narrative enabling believers to better engage others as well as better enhance a believer's hermeneutical aptitude.

Through teaching this series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* I realized the role doctrine plays in one's life. As noted, doctrine gives believers a sound hermeneutical tool for biblical interpretation. Furthermore, doctrine plays a significant role by sharpening one's religious view through its function as a clarifying supplement to Scripture. As a clarifying supplement, doctrine can shape and sharpen one's view on moral, ethical, parental, political, emotional, ecclesiological, soteriological, and eschatological, etc. found in Scripture. For this reason, the need for proper doctrinal understanding in the life of a believer cannot be understated.

Since doctrine can play such a massive role in the life of believers, it is, therefore, imperative in the life of the teacher/pastor to be clear regarding theological

stances and positions, as well as being well-versed in alternative viewpoints of these doctrines. I learned how I must not only be versed in the doctrine of which I am teaching and believing, but furthermore, be well-versed and understanding to the nuances and stances of opposite viewpoints. For example, knowing as best as possible the challenges of doctrines such as Article V: God's Purpose of Grace, enables the teacher not only to be prepared for a counterargument, but to honestly assess whether the doctrine is, in fact, true and something which should be adopted by the believers under his tutelage.

Also, doctrine should be clear in order to reduce confusion on the part of those who might be intimidated by the Bible as a whole narrative. Again, doctrine provides the synthesis by which believers can know what the Scripture teaches on a particular topic without have to scour the entire biblical text. This does not mean doctrine should take the place of scriptural study; however, it relieves believers from the need to proof-text Scripture and potentially taking it out of context. Furthermore, I do not wish the congregation to be ignorant regarding the Bible's teaching on theological topics. Being clear on theology eliminates confusion and potential theological conflict in the minds and hearts of those to whom I was attempting to teach and serve.

I found myself during the course of the study on *The Baptist Faith and Message* having to further clarify statements I already believed to be clear, due to my previous theological study and familiarity. It was easy to deliver the sessions using a certain level of theological language in which I thought to be simple and clear; however, it soon became apparent, despite the fact that using theological language is fine, that its meaning and definition must be clear or it might result in confusion for the people to whom I was attempting to lead.

Closely related to being clear in doctrine, I learned I must be patient as a pastor leading those with limited theological understanding. While I knew this would be a reality going into the series, this foreknowledge was reinforced by the need to be patient with those who had never been exposed to *The Baptist Faith and Message* or any other

formal theological document or statement of belief. In reality, I was extremely pleased to be patient with his participants who were asking questions regarding what certain theological terms meant and their implication. I also had to realize some of the issues discussed were completely new and were potentially reshaping students' views of the nature of how God operates and/or how believers should function in the world. The importance of teaching doctrine and doing so in a loving, pastoral, caring, patient manner must be readily evident when realizing one that teaches and preaches wields a great deal of influence and power over the theological perceptions and moods of individuals, and therefore, over the local church congregation itself. If a teacher is cold and harsh with his students, or makes participants feel as if they are inadequate or unable to understand the concept in which the pastor/leader is readily familiar, they may abandon their pursuit and perhaps their attempt at understanding Scripture as a whole. This would be an extremely negative result for any pastor wishing to enrich his congregation with a robust doctrinal understanding. Therefore, loving, patient, pastoral care with those who do not readily have theological training and understanding is indispensable for the pastor/teacher.

By being a caring, loving, patient teacher, I attempted to translate complex theological concepts and doctrines into understandable, relatable concepts with which participants could readily identify. Many analogies to the theological content were used by comparing family relationships to the body of Christ, the Trinity, and the topic of marriage. I also used graphs, lists, visual aids, etc. in order to translate potentially confusing aspects of theology into concepts which believers could tangibly understand. I realized the average participant was not going to engage in theological concepts with theological language all the time. While some participants may enjoy theological concepts and can use its common language, this scenario is not the norm. Pastors, and, I in particular, had to find ways in which to take a seemingly abstract theological concept and translate it for common understanding. This must not be seen as “dumbing down” or “watering down” theological concepts. Making such use of analogy and translation as opposed to using

theological language may be seen as “dumbing” or “watering down” in a theological setting or seminary; however, in a teaching scenario with laymen who are not seeking to be pastors or theologians, being able to translate using common speech and analogy is necessary for communicating well to one’s audience. Obviously, if a person wished to use theological language and concepts without translation, I would engage them on that level, but the ability to discern an audience is a premium for the pastor/teacher.

I realized as I was teaching the series how critical it was for me to be theologically/doctrinally sound in my belief system and teaching. A great pastor/teacher must himself be a lifelong learner and a lifelong student of theology and should always strive to improve his grasp of theology, not only for himself, but for his family's and his church’s edification. The pastor/teacher wields a tremendous amount of influence over the theological/doctrinal beliefs of those he leads. While massive shifts in theology do not normally occur over a short time with adults by means of a thirteen-week study as the one in discussion, the pastor/leader, however, over the course of many years certainly has the potential to slowly craft and influence the theological understanding and belief systems of individuals, as well as their local congregation as a whole. Therefore, I have learned the importance of a pastor’s personal assurance in doctrinal and orthodoxy in teaching, preaching, and belief.

Finally, I have grown significantly as a pastor/teacher/leader during the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Chiefly, I have learned about my own personal ministry, the importance of doctrine in a person’s personal life, the importance of clarity in doctrinal teaching, as well as the importance of being patient with those where theology/doctrine is a new pursuit. I have also grown in my awareness of the necessity of being adept at translating theological concepts for those who may not understand or are not aware of formal theological concepts/language, as well as the importance of how beneficial a theologically/doctrinally sound pastor is to me, as well as for my family and the local congregation to which I am called to lead.

Conclusions

The sessions on *The Baptist Faith and Message* proved to be a challenging, stimulating, and beneficial series for all involved. I strived to ensure the participants that the main goal of our class times was not the fulfillment of my personal academic endeavors with this study. Rather, I sought to provide participants a venue in which they could come, study, learn, reflect, dialogue, and grow in their relationship with Christ by means of studying a theological document which has made great effort to be as biblically faithful as humanly possible. This study was not only beneficial to the participants who attended and me, but could be a benefit for anyone in a Southern Baptist church wishing to take their congregation or small group through a series on the doctrine in which Southern Baptists have the greatest amount of agreement. I wish to provide to the reader some concluding remarks on his series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* and what it could mean to the reader's local church context.

A series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*, when used in tandem with the pre/post-series survey, can provide local church pastors with a solid, relatively objective rubric or tool with which they can assess congregants' knowledge and/or understanding of generally held Southern Baptist doctrine. It might be difficult for the local pastor to personally engage each believer in his congregation and make an objective determination of what a particular congregant believes on the main eighteen tenets of Southern Baptist doctrine. Therefore, when the local pastor utilizes the pre/post-series survey, he will be provided with a rather conclusive map of what degree a particular congregant believes on any number of Southern Baptist doctrines.

Furthermore, the pastor could couple not just one survey, but examine all the surveys and ascertain, as was done through this particular study, what an entire group/congregation believes on Southern Baptist doctrine. This research instruments will aid and enable the pastor to know which areas he should invest more time in teaching and which areas he should feel his congregation/group have the most orthodox Southern Baptist theological views.

This study can be helpful to both laymen and pastors alike by assisting in the formation of participants' personal theology and awareness of Southern Baptist doctrine. The study can aid in the formation of Southern Baptist doctrine especially when the participant is a new believer or a new member to a Southern Baptist congregation. However, being a new believer or a new member of the Southern Baptist congregation is not the only context in which a member will formulate Southern Baptist doctrine during this study. Many believers simply may not have a formulated theology on a particular issue, whether or not participants would describe their views as a "formulated theology." Many, it could be assumed, already have a "formulated theology" regarding the nature of the Scriptures (Article I), "God" (Article II) or "Salvation" (Article IV), but not have a "formulated theology" on issues such as "Last Things" (Article X), "Education" (Article XII) or "Peace and War" (Article XVI). The study on *The Baptist Faith and Message* can reveal to long-term congregants the areas in which they do not currently have "formulated theologies," which the study attempts to rectify.

The study on *The Baptist Faith and Message* may not in all circumstances formulate new theological understanding, but bring awareness to theology in which congregants may choose to further invest in at a later date. While teaching through *The Baptist Faith and Message*, it would be wise to make a list of helpful books and resources participants may purchase or check out from the pastor's personal library on the topic being discussed. The series could bring about a further interest on the part of a participant who may, for example, wish to study in greater detail the topics of the "Trinity" (Article II), "Ecclesiology" (Article VI) or "Evangelism and Missions" (Article XI). *The Baptist Faith and Message* study could serve as an initiator for God to grow an individual for a specific area of service in the church through fostering a greater interest in one of the doctrinal tenets.

Even though adults do not seem to have massive, polarizing shifts in their personal belief paradigm across many doctrinal tenets after going through *The Baptist*

Faith and Message series, the series does provide, however, a venue whereby current believers can sharpen their personal knowledge and understanding of Southern Baptist doctrine and, thereby, their knowledge and understanding of Scripture. Where one can believe in certain doctrinal tenets, one may not know *why* they were taught to believe this way; or, for example, *why* Southern Baptist hold to immersion as the primary Biblical mode of baptism (Article VII) while Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists do not. The series provides many of the answers to the *why* questions believers might raise when it comes to Southern Baptist doctrinal belief and ecclesiastical practice. The study of *The Baptist Faith and Message* has the potential for believers to bring clarity and focus to their previously and currently held doctrinal assertions.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* has taught me how to be a better minister in terms of being a quality teacher of doctrine to adults. The local church pastor will have to learn how to potentially translate heavy theological statements in to statements which are appropriate and absorbable to his particular ministry context. The minister will be made a better teacher by having to understand not only the content of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, but also the context and intent behind the words it contains. The pastor should be familiar with earlier versions of *The Baptist Faith and Message* and the doctrine they contain, as well as ways the 2000 version differs from previous versions as the potential is great that the instructor may be confronted with variances in wording which could have the potential to alter the context of the tenet in the opinion of some participants. The local church pastor will benefit because he will have to familiarize himself not only with the doctrine of the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* and the different versions of the document, but also with theological stances perhaps held by some which are opposed to *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Such differences may be most readily apparent when teaching Article V: “God’s Purpose of Grace” and Article XV: “The Christian and the Social Order.”

The series on *The Baptist Faith and Message* should aid the pastor in

becoming a more patient, loving, and encouraged pastor as he witnesses members of his congregation attempt to study the deeper, more theological aspects of Scripture.

In conclusion, the project had as its purpose to develop and teach a thirteen-week curriculum on *The Baptist Faith and Message* among a core group of adults at Highland Baptist Church, Tullahoma, Tennessee. This objective was accomplished. While there were objective goals to be met, there was also a non-academic practical desire for me: the desire for each participant to know and understand the Lord “who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth. For in these things [the Lord] delights” (Jer 9: 24). This was the motivation for this project in the lives of the participants of the study on *The Baptist Faith and Message*. This study seemed to fulfill this objective in the short-term, and hopefully, the long term as well.

The local pastor would benefit immensely in leading his congregation in this study for both his own personal edification and the edification of his church for years to come so that Joshua 4: 20-23 might come to fruition in the lives of those he serves:

And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know, “Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.” For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-SERIES AND POST-SERIES SURVEY ON *THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE*

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. This research is being conducted by Stephen Keene for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and then you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal “code” word: _____

Date: _____

Please answer the following multiple choice questions (circle the correct answer)

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

DS = Disagree Slightly

AS = Agree Slightly

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

The Scriptures

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|----|---|----|--|
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 1. The Bible was written by divinely inspired men. |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 2. The Bible is God’s revelation to man. |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 3. Even though God inspired Scripture, it remains a document written by men and is, therefore, subject to having slight errors in history, dates, events, etc. |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 4. There are certain truths of the Bible which do not apply in all contexts, times, and cultures. |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 5. The Bible contains absolutely no errors at all. |

God

- SD D DS AS A SA 6. There is only one living and true God.
- SD D DS AS A SA 7. God is an intelligent, spiritual and personal Being.
- SD D DS AS A SA 8. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.
- SD D DS AS A SA 9. God is *omnipotent*, meaning God is all-powerful, except when human beings act outside his will.
- SD D DS AS A SA 10. God is *omniscient*, meaning God is all-knowing about everything except for the free-will decisions of mankind.

God the Father

- SD D DS AS A SA 11. Because Satan opposes God and causes mankind to sin, God the Father will reign unchallenged over the entire universe only after the end of history.
- SD D DS AS A SA 12. In the role of God the Father, God reigns unchallenged over all creatures.
- SD D DS AS A SA 13. In the role of God the Father, God reigns unchallenged over human history, according to the purposes of His will.
- SD D DS AS A SA 14. God the Father is truly Father of anyone who places their faith in Jesus Christ.
- SD D DS AS A SA 15. Even though God is Father, He is not the head of the Trinity.

God the Son

- SD D DS AS A SA 16. God the Father has existed from eternity past, however, Jesus has not been eternal because He is first revealed in the New Testament
- SD D DS AS A SA 17. As a human, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary.

- SD D DS AS A SA 18. Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- SD D DS AS A SA 19. Jesus is literally, bodily resurrected from the grave.
- SD D DS AS A SA 20. Trusting Jesus physically rose from the dead is not necessary for salvation; the most important thing is believing He is with God the Father.

God the Holy Spirit

- SD D DS AS A SA 21. The Holy Spirit is Spirit of God, and is completely divine.
- SD D DS AS A SA 22. The Holy Spirit is the One Who guided and inspired the Biblical writers.
- SD D DS AS A SA 23. Even though the promoting of the Holy Spirit is good; it is not absolutely necessary for one to come to faith in Christ due to humanity's capacity to be thinking rationale people who make autonomous decisions.
- SD D DS AS A SA 24. The primary role of the Holy Spirit is to highlight and glorify Jesus Christ.
- SD D DS AS A SA 25. The Holy Spirit is the part of the Trinity which calls and draws persons to Christ.

Man

- SD D DS AS A SA 26. Mankind is but one of the creations of God which is created in His image.
- SD D DS AS A SA 27. God created gender when He made both male and female as the crowning work of creation.
- SD D DS AS A SA 28. Man sinned against God freely by His own choice and brought sin to the human race.
- SD D DS AS A SA 29. Humans are only sinners when they violate God's Law. Being a sinner has nothing to do with an inherited sinner nature from Adam.

SD D DS AS A SA 30. Ultimately, human life and personhood is sacred because God created people in His own Image.

Salvation

SD D DS AS A SA 31. Salvation is relegated *only* to the redemption of our souls for Jesus Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA 32. Salvation is a free gift of God; there is nothing one can do to earn salvation.

SD D DS AS A SA 33. Salvation involves four aspects: regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

SD D DS AS A SA 34. Regeneration could be called a “new birth”. In regeneration, people literally become new creations in Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA 35. There is salvation outside of Jesus Christ only in extreme circumstances such as someone who has never heard the Name of Jesus.

God’s Purposes of Grace

SD D DS AS A SA 36. By God’s election, it is God alone who regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies.

SD D DS AS A SA 37. Election is consistent with the freedom of mankind.

SD D DS AS A SA 38. Election should promote humility in the life of the believer.

SD D DS AS A SA 39. Because of election, all those who are God’s will remain so until the end.

SD D DS AS A SA 40. Because of election there is no need to evangelize the lost.

The Church

SD D DS AS A SA 41. The New Testament church should be an autonomous local body.

SD D DS AS A SA 42. In a Baptist church, there are seven ordinances.

- SD D DS AS A SA 43. A Baptist church should operate in a democratic manner under the Lordship of Christ.
- SD D DS AS A SA 44. Men and women both have giftedness for service in the local body of believers.
- SD D DS AS A SA 45. The church as the Body of Christ consists of all believers of any age, time in history, nationality or people group.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

- SD D DS AS A SA 46. Baptism by sprinkling is just as valid as immersion.
- SD D DS AS A SA 47. Christian baptism should always been in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- SD D DS AS A SA 48. Christian baptism does not save someone, but rather only an act of obedience to Christ.
- SD D DS AS A SA 49. Believers should believe that the Lord's Supper is only a symbolic act of obedience to Christ.
- SD D DS AS A SA 50. Unbelievers should be allowed to take the Lord's Supper because it promotes a spirit of inclusion and welcoming on behalf of the Church.

The Lord's Day

- SD D DS AS A SA 51. The Lord's Day should always be on the first day of the week.
- SD D DS AS A SA 52. The Lord's Day should be viewed as a Christian institution which deserves regular observance.
- SD D DS AS A SA 53. The Lord's Day should always commemorate the resurrection of Christ from the dead.
- SD D DS AS A SA 54. Because The Lord's Day includes exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, worship should therefore be primarily regulated to the church house on Sundays.

SD D DS AS A SA 55. The Lord's Day should always involve corporate worship with a local body of believers if one is able.

The Kingdom

SD D DS AS A SA 56. The term "Kingdom of God" is symbolism for God being powerful and does not refer to God reigning over creation as King.

SD D DS AS A SA 57. The term "Kingdom of God" refers only to His particular kingship over those who willfully acknowledge Him as King.

SD D DS AS A SA 58. The Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA 59. It is a primary Christian responsibility to pray that the Kingdom may come.

SD D DS AS A SA 60. It is a primary Christian responsibility to labor that the Kingdom may come.

Last Things

SD D DS AS A SA 61. God is sovereign over the times and dates regarding the world's end and cannot be influenced by man's actions.

SD D DS AS A SA 62. Jesus' return will be powerful, and He will be in physical form.

SD D DS AS A SA 63. Jesus' return will be visible.

SD D DS AS A SA 64. Unlike Jesus' humble first coming, His return will be in glory and victory.

SD D DS AS A SA 65. The dead in Christ will be physically raised a few years after Christ's return.

Evangelism and Missions

SD D DS AS A SA 66. The church as a Body of believers should view evangelism and missions as a privilege but not as a duty.

- SD D DS AS A SA 67. The one who evangelizes and does missions must be a regenerate believer in Christ.
- SD D DS AS A SA 68. Participation in evangelism and missions are actual commandments of God to believers.
- SD D DS AS A SA 69. Christian witness for the believer in Christ is primarily verbal and not a visible Christian lifestyle to unbelievers.
- SD D DS AS A SA 70. Christian witness for the believer in Christ does not have to be verbal as long as the believer is living a lifestyle of Christian witness to unbelievers.

Education

- SD D DS AS A SA 71. Christianity is a faith of intelligence.
- SD D DS AS A SA 72. All sound learning is part of our Christian heritage, because God is the Source of all knowledge.
- SD D DS AS A SA 73. The new birth eliminates our need for further study and reading because we only have one book by which Christians should concern themselves.
- SD D DS AS A SA 74. Christian education should receive unanimous support from the local church.
- SD D DS AS A SA 75. The academic freedom in a Christian school, college, or seminary is not limited by the preeminence of Jesus Christ.

Stewardship

- SD D DS AS A SA 76. Believers have a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a bound stewardship in their possessions.
- SD D DS AS A SA 77. Christians are obligated to serve God with their time, talents and material possessions.

- SD D DS AS A SA 78. Christians are suggested, however, not obligated, to recognize all possessions are entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and helping others.
- SD D DS AS A SA 79. Christians are suggested, however, not obligated, to contribute of their means for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.
- SD D DS AS A SA 80. Christians should contribute of their means liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Cooperation

- SD D DS AS A SA 81. Associations and conventions should at times have authority over local churches.
- SD D DS AS A SA 82. Conventions and associations should only be voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of believers in the most effective manner.
- SD D DS AS A SA 83. Churches should cooperate for the purposes of forwarding missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for God's Kingdom.
- SD D DS AS A SA 84. Spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people is Christian unity in the New Testament sense.
- SD D DS AS A SA 85. Cooperation should be desired between various Christian denominations under any circumstance.

The Christian and the Social Order

- SD D DS AS A SA 86. Means and methods used for the establishment of righteousness among people can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.
- SD D DS AS A SA 87. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose every form of greed, selfishness and vice.

- SD D DS AS A SA 88. Christians should oppose sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography in certain circumstances.
- SD D DS AS A SA 89. All believers should work to provide for the orphaned, needy, abused, aged, helpless, and sick.
- SD D DS AS A SA 90. All believers should oppose abortion and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death only in certain circumstances.

Peace and War

- SD D DS AS A SA 91. Christians should see it as a duty to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness.
- SD D DS AS A SA 92. All believers should do all that is within their power to promote a war they feel is justified.
- SD D DS AS A SA 93. The gospel of Christ alone is the only answer for a war-like spirit.
- SD D DS AS A SA 94. The acceptance of Christ's teachings is the ultimate need of the world in the affairs of people and nations.
- SD D DS AS A SA 95. Christian people should pray to engage in war they believe is just.

Religious Liberty

- SD D DS AS A SA 96. Believers should hold Church and State are separate.
- SD D DS AS A SA 97. The State should be allowed to show favoritism to one church or another if it so wishes.
- SD D DS AS A SA 98. Christians should be obedient to the laws of the lands and its governing bodies, even if it may ask something of its citizens against God's Word, because civil government is ordained by God.

SD D DS AS A SA 99. The church should never resort or rely on civil power to carry out its mission.

SD D DS AS A SA 100. The State has no right to impose penalties for religious views of any sort.

The Family

SD D DS AS A SA 101. The foundational institution in human society is the family, comprised of persons related by marriage, blood or adoption.

SD D DS AS A SA 102. The union of one man and one woman in a covenant relationship for a lifetime is one of the best contexts for marriage.

SD D DS AS A SA 103. Biblical roles of a husband and wife do not exist because the husband and the wife are both of equal value before God and are each made in His Image.

SD D DS AS A SA 104. Parents are to teach their children morally and spiritually. Parents are to lead with their lifestyle and with loving discipline.

SD D DS AS A SA 105. Children are commanded to honor and obey their parents.

This section can be completed during the post-survey for personal assessment

SD D DS AS A SA 1. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article I: The Scriptures?

SD D DS AS A SA 2. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article II: God?

SD D DS AS A SA 3. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article III: Man?

SD D DS AS A SA 4. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article IV: Salvation?

SD D DS AS A SA 5. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article V: God's Purpose of Grace?

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|----|---|----|--|
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 6. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article VI: The Church? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 7. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article VII: Baptism and the Lord's Supper? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 8. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article VIII: The Lord's Day? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 9. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article IX: The Kingdom? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 10. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article X: Last Things? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 11. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article XI: Evangelism and Missions? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 12. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article XII: Education? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 13. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article XIII: Stewardship? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 14. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article XIV: Cooperation? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 15. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article XV: The Church and the Social Order? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 16. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article XVI: Peace and War? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 17. Do you feel you have increased in your of Article XVII: Religious Liberty? |
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA | 18. Do you feel you have increased in your understanding of Article XVIII: The Family? |

APPENDIX 2
SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Pre-series survey results

Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	Mean
1	0	0	0	0	15	156	85.5
2	0	0	0	4	15	150	55
3 *	12	2	9	4	40	6	12.16
4 *	14	10	12	8	5	18	11.16
5	2	2	6	8	40	84	23.66
6	0	0	0	0	0	174	174
7	0	0	3	0	10	156	56.33
8	0	0	0	0	15	156	85.5
9 *	13	5	6	0	15	36	15
10 *	16	4	9	4	10	30	12.16
11 *	10	14	12	4	15	24	13.16
12	1	2	6	8	40	90	24.5
13	1	0	6	0	40	108	38.75
14	0	2	0	0	20	144	70
15	12	18	9	0	25	0	16
16 *	18	12	9	0	5	6	10
17	0	4	3	0	15	138	40
18	0	0	0	0	25	144	84.5
19	0	2	0	0	25	138	55
20 *	17	16	6	4	0	6	9.8
21	0	0	0	0	25	144	84.5

Table A1 continued

22	0	2	0	4	40	114	40
23 *	12	22	9	8	0	6	11.4
24	2	4	6	24	30	72	23
25	0	2	0	8	40	108	39.5
26 *	14	12	0	4	10	36	15.2
27	1	0	0	12	50	90	38.25
28	0	0	0	0	45	120	82.5
29	1	2	0	3	25	126	31.4
30	0	0	0	8	25	132	55
31 *	1	2	3	20	40	78	24
32	0	2	0	4	0	156	54
33	0	0	3	12	45	90	37.5
34	0	2	0	4	40	114	40
35 *	15	20	3	8	5	0	10.2
36	0	6	0	8	40	96	37.5
37	1	4	9	8	55	66	28.83
38	1	2	6	12	55	66	23.66
39	1	8	0	4	20	114	29.4
40	16	14	9	8	0	6	10.6
41	2	2	6	20	25	84	23.16
42 *	8	18	3	8	35	12	14
43	1	2	3	16	50	66	23
44	0	0	0	4	35	126	55
45	0	0	0	0	35	135	85
46 *	7	18	6	24	20	6	13.5
47	0	0	0	4	40	120	54.6
48	0	2	0	0	20	144	55.33
49	0	0	6	4	55	90	38.75

Table A1 continued

50 *	17	18	9	0	0	0	14.66
51	3	8	3	20	60	24	19.66
52	0	0	3	20	65	60	37
53	0	2	3	24	75	36	28
54	5	14	15	20	25	12	11.83
55	0	4	0	12	60	72	37
56 *	9	24	15	4	0	12	12.8
57 *	5	10	9	8	55	18	17.5
58	0	0	0	24	58	60	47.33
59	1	2	3	32	55	42	22.5
60	2	6	0	20	58	36	24.4
61	1	4	0	16	30	96	29.4
62	2	4	6	20	40	60	22
63	1	0	3	4	35	114	31.4
64	0	0	3	0	30	132	54.66
65	21	4	12	4	5	0	9.2
66 *	16	18	9	4	5	6	9.66
67	6	10	6	4	50	30	17.66
68	0	0	3	8	30	120	40.25
69	13	20	6	8	5	6	9.66
70	3	18	9	24	30	12	16
71	3	16	3	24	30	18	15.66
72	0	8	3	12	50	66	27.8
73 *	17	18	6	0	0	6	11.75
74	0	0	3	8	55	90	39
75 *	6	14	15	16	25	12	88
76	0	0	6	12	65	54	34.23
77	0	0	0	0	55	108	81.5

Table A1 continued

78	6	20	6	8	35	12	14.5
79	5	22	9	16	25	6	13.83
80	0	0	3	28	50	66	36.75
81 *	13	12	6	12	25	0	13.6
82	0	0	9	12	80	42	35.75
83	0	0	0	0	75	72	73.5
84	0	0	3	12	90	42	36.75
85 *	5	4	3	28	55	18	18.83
86	0	0	0	16	60	84	53.33
87	0	0	3	4	65	84	39
88 *	4	22	0	0	35	42	25.75
89	0	0	0	4	30	132	55.33
90 *	7	22	0	8	20	30	17
91	0	0	12	8	58	60	34.5
92 *	3	18	21	12	30	6	15
93	0	6	18	24	35	42	25
94	0	0	0	32	45	72	49.66
95 *	3	22	12	24	15	12	14.66
96	2	8	9	8	60	36	20.5
97 *	13	24	0	8	10	0	13.75
98 *	9	24	3	16	15	0	13.4
99	1	10	12	12	30	60	20.83
100	3	6	3	16	35	60	20.5
101	0	0	3	4	70	78	38.75
102 *	2	2	0	4	45	96	29.8
103 *	9	14	12	8	20	18	13.5
104	0	0	0	4	30	132	55.33
105	0	0	0	8	15	144	55.66

Table A2. Post-series survey results

Statement	DS	D	SD	AS	A	SA	Mean
1	0	0	0	0	10	162	86
2	0	0	0	0	5	168	86.5
3 *	15	10	6	4	15	12	10.33
4 *	18	10	3	4	10	12	7.8
5	0	2	6	12	30	102	31.2
6	0	0	0	0	0	174	174
7	0	0	0	0	10	162	82
8	0	0	0	0	5	168	86.5
9 *	15	8	6	0	5	42	15.2
10 *	12	12	6	0	20	30	16
11 *	13	4	3	0	40	30	18
12	0	1	6	3	4	108	30.2
13	0	0	0	16	45	157	52.3
14	0	0	0	0	10	162	82
15	19	8	9	0	5	12	10.6
16 *	24	4	0	0	5	12	11.25
17	0	2	0	0	15	150	55.66
18	0	0	0	0	5	168	86.5
19	1	0	0	0	5	162	56
20 *	21	6	0	16	5	0	14.5
21	0	0	0	0	10	162	82
22	0	2	0	0	20	144	55.3
23 *	16	18	0	8	10	0	13
24	0	0	0	12	30	120	54
25	0	0	0	0	15	156	85.5
26 *	21	4	0	0	15	18	14.5
27	0	0	0	0	40	126	83

Table A2 continued

28	0	0	0	0	10	162	82
29 *	14	20	0	12	5	6	11.4
30	0	0	0	0	35	132	83.5
31 *	2	4	0	8	55	78	29.4
32	0	0	3	0	5	162	56.66
33	0	0	0	0	20	150	85
34	2	4	0	0	25	126	39.25
35 *	17	18	0	8	0	6	5.44
36	2	0	3	0	20	132	38.75
37 *	2	2	12	8	50	60	21.66
38	2	2	3	8	50	78	47.66
39	1	6	0	0	30	114	37.75
40	25	8	0	0	0	0	16.5
41	0	2	0	4	20	138	41
42 *	15	8	0	12	15	18	13.6
43	1	0	0	0	45	108	51.33
44	0	0	0	0	35	132	83.5
45	0	0	0	0	20	150	85
46 *	13	18	0	16	15	0	15.5
47	0	0	0	0	30	138	84
48	0	0	0	0	15	156	85.5
49	1	2	0	0	30	126	39.75
50 *	25	8	0	0	0	0	16.5
51	2	12	0	16	45	54	29.8
52	2	0	3	4	30	114	30.6
53	0	0	0	0	40	126	83
54	3	24	3	16	25	24	15.83
55	0	0	0	4	40	120	54.66

Table A2 continued

56 *	11	24	0	16	10	0	12.75
57 *	3	14	6	16	35	36	18.33
58	1	0	0	4	40	114	39.75
59	0	4	0	8	40	102	38.5
60	1	6	0	12	40	84	28.6
61	1	6	0	4	15	132	31.6
62	1	4	3	8	30	102	24.66
63	0	4	0	4	10	144	42
64	0	0	0	0	10	162	86
65	20	16	0	0	5	0	13.66
66 *	17	14	9	4	5	0	9.8
67	0	4	0	0	45	108	52.33
68	0	2	0	0	35	126	54.33
69	15	16	12	4	5	0	10.4
70	9	16	6	12	20	18	13.5
71	6	12	0	20	30	36	20.8
72	0	0	3	0	60	96	53
73 *	17	20	0	4	0	6	11.75
74	0	0	0	4	58	90	50.66
75 *	9	14	12	20	10	12	12.83
76	0	0	0	8	45	108	53.66
77	1	0	0	4	0	162	55.66
78 *	12	16	9	4	15	12	11.33
79	11	14	9	4	30	6	12.33
80	0	2	0	8	25	126	40.25
81 *	14	22	3	0	10	6	10.8
82	1	2	3	4	60	78	24.66
83	0	0	0	0	45	120	82.5

Table A2 continued

84	6	14	3	24	15	36	16.33
85	5	16	3	24	15	36	16.5
86	0	0	0	4	50	108	54
87	0	0	0	0	30	138	84
88 *	15	8	0	4	10	48	17
89	0	0	0	0	25	144	84.5
90 *	13	12	0	8	10	42	17
91	0	2	0	0	45	144	63.66
92 *	6	16	14	20	25	6	14.5
93	0	2	3	20	40	84	29.8
94	0	2	0	8	30	120	40
95 *	8	6	12	24	35	6	15.16
96	1	6	3	0	30	108	29.6
97 *	22	12	0	0	5	0	13
98 *	13	24	6	4	5	0	8.4
99	0	14	9	4	15	90	26.4
100	0	6	0	20	20	102	37
101	0	0	0	0	30	138	84
102 *	4	6	3	0	10	114	27.4
103 *	15	12	12	4	10	6	9.83
104	0	0	0	0	5	168	86.5
105	0	0	0	0	10	162	86

Table A3. *t*-test for dependent samples/final results

Statement	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Difference	% Difference
1	85.5	86	0.5	0.58
2	55	86.5	31.5	57.3
3 *	12.16	10.33	-1.83	-15
4 *	11.16	7.8	-3.36	-30
5	23.66	31.2	7.54	31.8
6	174	174	0	0
7	56.33	82	25.67	45.5
8	85.5	86.5	1	1.1
9 *	15	15.2	0.2	1.3
10 *	12.16	16	3.84	31.5
11 *	13.16	18	4.84	36.7
12	24.5	30.2	5.7	23.2
13	38.75	52.3	13.55	34.9
14	70	82	12	17.1
15	16	10.6	5.4	-33.8
16 *	10	11.25	1.25	12.5
17	40	55.66	15.66	39.15
18	84.5	86.5	2	2.3
19	55	56	1	1.8
20 *	9.8	14.5	4.7	47.9
21	84.5	82	2.5	-2.9
22	40	55.3	15.3	38.2
23 *	11.4	13	1.6	14
24	23	54	31	129
25	39.5	85.5	46	116
26 *	15.2	14.5	0.7	-4.6
27	38.25	83	43.75	117

Table A3 continued

28	82.5	82	-0.5	-0.61
29 *	31.4	11.4	-20	-64
30	55	83.5	28.5	51.8
31 *	24	29.4	5.4	22.5
32	54	56.66	2.66	4.9
33	37.5	85	47.5	1.26
34	40	39.25	-0.75	-1.8
35 *	10.2	5.44	-4.76	-46.6
36	37.5	38.75	1.25	3.3
37	28.83	21.66	-7.17	-24.8
38	23.66	47.66	24	101.4
39	29.4	37.75	8.35	28.4
40	10.6	16.5	5.9	55.6
41	23.16	41	17.84	77
42 *	14	13.6	-0.4	-2.8
43	23	51.33	28.33	123
44	55	83.5	28.5	51.8
45	85	85	0	0
46 *	13.5	15.5	2	14.8
47	54.6	84	29.4	53.8
48	55.33	85.5	30.17	54.5
49	38.75	39.75	1	2.5
50 *	14.66	16.5	1.84	39.4
51	19.66	29.8	10.14	51.5
52	37	30.6	-6.4	-17.3
53	28	83	55	196
54	11.83	15.83	4	33.8
55	37	54.66	17.66	47.7

Table A3 continued

56 *	12.8	12.75	-0.5	-0.39
57 *	17.5	18.33	0.83	0.47
58	47.33	39.75	-7.58	-0.16
59	22.5	38.5	16	71.1
60	24.4	28.6	4.2	4.2
61	29.4	31.6	2.2	7.4
62	22	24.66	2.66	12
63	31.4	42	10.6	10.6
64	54.66	86	31.34	57.3
65	9.2	13.66	4.46	43.4
66 *	9.66	9.8	0.14	1.4
67	17.66	52.33	34.67	196
68	40.25	54.33	14.08	35
69	9.66	10.4	0.74	7.76
70	16	13.5	-2.5	-15.6
71	15.66	20.8	5.14	32.8
72	27.8	53	25.2	108
73 *	11.75	11.75	0	0
74	39	50.66	11.66	29.8
75 *	88	12.83	-75.17	-85.4
76	34.23	53.66	19.43	56.7
77	81.5	55.66	-25.84	-31.7
78 *	14.5	11.33	-3.17	-21.8
79	13.83	12.33	-1.5	-10.8
80	36.75	40.25	3.5	9.5
81 *	13.6	10.8	2.8	-20.5
82	35.75	24.66	-11.09	-31
83	73.5	82.5	9	82.5

Table A3 continued

84	36.75	16.33	-20.42	-55.5
85 *	18.83	16.5	-2.33	-12.3
86	53.33	54	0.67	1.2
87	39	84	45	115
88 *	25.75	17	-8.75	-33.9
89	55.33	84.5	29.17	52.7
90 *	17	17	0	0
91	34.5	63.66	29.16	84.5
92 *	15	14.5	-0.5	-3.3
93	25	29.8	4.8	19.2
94	49.66	40	-9.66	-19.4
95 *	14.66	15.16	0.5	3.4
96	20.5	29.6	9.1	44.3
97 *	13.75	13	-0.75	-5.4
98 *	13.4	8.4	-5	-37.3
99	20.83	26.4	5.57	26.7
100	20.5	37	16.5	80.4
101	38.75	84	45.25	116
102 *	29.8	27.4	-2.4	-8
103 *	13.5	9.83	-3.67	-27.1
104	55.33	86.5	31.17	56.3
105	55.66	86	30.34	54.5
Average =	34.63	42.49	8.06	24.477
SD =	25.3323	30.6043	17.436	48.417
CV =	2.048407			
<i>t</i> =	1.701131			
<i>P</i> =	0.00672			
105 item survey with 6 pt Likert scale used / maximum score of 630				

The teaching of the Southern Baptist doctrine on the *Baptist Faith and Message* to a select group of adults made a statistically significant difference results in the increase of their doctrinal understanding ($t(9) = 1.702231, p < .00676$).

APPENDIX 3

EXPERT PANEL CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Teaching Baptist Doctrine at Highland Baptist Church					
Theological Content Evaluation					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments (if needed)
The curriculum reflects theological accuracy.					
Scripture is used correctly to support each doctrine.					
The curriculum reflects orthodox Christian doctrine.					
The curriculum presents how each topic is vital for a proper understanding of Christ and the church.					
The curriculum aligns with conservative, theological orthodoxy.					

Baptist Consistency Evaluation					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments (if needed)
The curriculum remains faithful to the Baptist Faith and Message.					
The curriculum presents the Baptist Faith and Message in a clear and concise manner.					
The curriculum contributes to the layman's growth in understanding Southern Baptist doctrine.					
The curriculum presents Southern Baptist doctrine correctly/accurately.					
The curriculum contributes to the layman's knowledge of who Southern Baptists are as a denomination.					

Educational Material Evaluation					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments (if needed)
The curriculum is presented clearly to the learner.					
The curriculum is presented in a manner that helps the learner easily understand the material.					
The curriculum is likely to enhance the layman's understanding of the topic.					
The curriculum is presented in such a way that it could be understood by learners of varying educational backgrounds.					
The discussion questions flow well/logically from the material.					

Further Comments:

APPENDIX 4

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE TEACHER'S CURRICULUM

Outline of Each Session

Each session in the curriculum on the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message consists of 4 sections:

- I. Introduction
- II. Statements and questions on the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message
- III. Open-ended Question/Answer Time on the discussed tenet
- IV. Wrap up. Instructor will give next week's assignment and dismiss in prayer

Estimated Time Outline for Each Session

Each session in this curriculum on the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message will be an hour in length. Below is an example of time one can expect to spend on each section per session:

- I. Introduction (5 Minutes)
- II. Statements and questions on the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message (40 Minutes)
- III. Open-ended Question/Answer Time on the discussed tenet (12 Minutes)
- IV. Wrap up. Instructor will give next week's assignment and dismiss in prayer (3 Minutes)

How to Best Utilize This Curriculum

Every session examines one Article of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. Concentrating on one Article per week provides the instructor the opportunity to focus on each individual tenet and provides the student time to read each tenet multiple times during the week, as well as all relative Scripture passages provided by the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. Each Article varies in length and may include certain tenets of which the instructor feels their students are already well aware. The instructor may feel free to examine certain statements more in-depth which will be of use in their particular ministry context. All sessions have example introduction statements, as well as a concrete learning objective for the instructor to achieve for each session.

Students may wish to do further discussion, follow-up or clarification on certain tenets. The instructor must communicate to students of the instructor's availability for further clarification during the "Wrap up" portion of each session.

Article I: The Scriptures

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand the Bible as inerrant, true, trustworthy, eternal and is God's revelation to mankind with its primary focus upon Christ.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Introduction: When we talk about the Scriptures, both in worship and throughout this series, we will be specifically talking about the canon of 66 books of scripture contained in the Holy Bible. We will not include in our discussion what are commonly referred to as the Apocryphal books of Scripture included in the Catholic canon of Scripture.

A. The Baptist Faith and Message says, "The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man."

- 1. What does it mean that scripture was inspired by God, yet written by men?*
- 2. Even though it was men who penned the Scripture, Who is in control of what is written?*
- 3. How can God control what is written yet still have the author's writing style and personality revealed in the text?*
- 4. What does it mean when the Baptist Faith & Message says the Bible "is God's revelation of Himself to man?"*
- 5. How does the authority of Scripture differ from the authority of the pastor or any church official's words?*

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Scripture "has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

- 1. According to the Baptist Faith & Message, what is the chief end of the Bible for mankind?*
- 2. What is the difference between something which contains truths, or is truth versus something which claims it is Truth in and of itself?*
- 3. How does the Baptist Faith & Message speak of the Bible's claim about itself? Does the Baptist Faith & Message claim the Bible contains truths or instead the Bible itself is Truth?*

C. The Baptist Faith & Message draws the conclusion, "Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy."

1. Why does the Bible and the Baptist Faith & Message claim Scripture as completely true?

2. Why does the Bible and the Baptist Faith & Message claim Scripture as completely trustworthy?

3. What does it mean to “trust” the Bible?

4. Do we trust the Scripture the same way we trust Jesus?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible will “remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.”

1. What are some implications of God’s Word being eternal?

2. What are some implications of God’s Word being the supreme standard of human conduct?

3. What are some implications of God’s Word being the standard by which we draw all our theological statements?

4. What are some implications of God’s Word being the standard by which all religious opinions should be judged?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims, “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”

1. What is the focal person of the Scripture?

2. If this is true, what is the primary object of the Scriptures - both Old and New Testament?

F. Question and Answer

G. Assign the class to read Section II: God and read the passages at the end of the section.

H. Pray and dismiss.

Article II: God

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand God as living, true, intelligent, spiritual and personal as well as understanding the attributes of God being Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, Ruler, holy, omniscient, omnipotent and eternal.

Introduction: When we talk about God in this series and specifically in this lesson, we are talking about the God of the Bible. We are not referencing any other deity or claiming anything about any other religions' view of god. In this session, we are specifically discussing the three Person of what is known as the Trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, "There is one and only one living and true God."

1. Why is the exclusivity of God the Father being the only God (monotheistic) necessary for the believer in Christ? Why can't a person hold to a polytheistic theology and still have faith in Christ?

2. Why does God have to be the "true" God necessary for a person to be a Christian? Why can't a person believe in Christ, yet still believe that perhaps an Islamic or Hindu view of God is more accurate?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God "is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being."

1. What does it mean for God to be each of these things respectively?

2. To what extent is God, intelligent, spiritual and personal?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God, "is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe."

1. What does it mean for God to be each of these things respectively?

2. To what extent is God Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of the universe?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God, "is infinite in holiness and all other perfections."

1. What does it mean for God to be infinite in holiness?

2. To what might the term "all other perfections" be referring?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, "God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures."

1. What does it mean for God to be truly omniscient?

2. What does it mean for God to be truly omnipotent?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God, “The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.”

1. What does it mean the Trinity is not divided in nature, essence or being”?

G. Question and Answer

H. Assign the class to read Section II: God and read the passages at the end of the section.

I. Pray and dismiss.

Article II: God - Points A-C

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand God as one God expressed in the three Persons of the Trinity.

Introduction: When we talk about God in this series and specifically in this lesson, we are talking about the God of the Bible. We are not referencing any other deity or claiming anything about any other religions' view of god. In this session, we are specifically discussing the three Person of what is known as the Trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God the Father

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Father has overarching reign over the universe, creation, history “according to the purposes of His grace.”

1. What can a Christian conclude about God's power and authority from this statement?

2. Why can a believer have increased confidence in God and not less because of this reality about God the Father?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Father “is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.”

1. What does it mean for the believer knowing that God the Father is not only omnipotent and omniscient, but also all loving and all wise?

2. How does this increase the believer's trust that God exercises His authority correctly?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Father “is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.”

1. Even though God is providential Ruler over all, the only ones who have the right to call God “Father” are whom?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Father “is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.”

1. How can God the Father be Ruler and Master over all persons, yet at the same time not be called their “Father?”

God the Son

Scriptural Support: Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Son “is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.”

1. How has Jesus always been eternal? Is there a difference between Jesus always existing and His bodily form?

2. Why does Jesus have to be eternal?

3. Why did Jesus have to be born of a woman and the Holy Spirit?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Son “perfectly revealed and did the will of God” and identified “Himself completely with mankind yet without sin.”

1. How did Jesus perfectly reveal and do the will of God?

2. How is it possible to “identify with mankind,” but do so “without sin”?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that by God the Son’s “substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion.”

1. Why was Jesus the only one who could make this provision?

2. What was the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body? Is the bodily resurrection meant to be understood literally?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Son “ascended into heaven,” “at the right hand of God,” “is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man.”

1. What does Jesus’ current physical location say about Him?

2. *What are the implications of Jesus being the only Mediator between God and man?*

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Son “will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.”

1. *Why is the nature of Jesus’ return so drastically opposite of His first coming?*

2. *Why does Jesus have the right to judge the world?*

3. *Why is the judgement the final act of His redemptive mission?*

4. *What is the significance of Christ’s indwelling of believers?*

The Holy Spirit

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Holy Spirit “inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures.”

1. *Who is in control of the writing of Scriptures?*

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Holy Spirit “exalts Christ...convicts of sin, righteousness and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration...baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ...cultivates Christian character, comforts believers...bestows the spiritual gifts and seals the believer unto the day of final redemption.”

1. *According to this list, what might the role of the Holy Spirit be for the believer in Christ?*

2. *Why might the Holy Spirit’s role often be overlooked?*

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Holy Spirit “His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ.”

1. *How might the presence of the Holy Spirit be a “guarantee” that God will do in them what He said He would do?*

2. *How might we tell if the Holy Spirit is working/present in our lives?*

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Holy Spirit “enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.”

1. *How does the Holy Spirit “enlighten and empower the believer in worship, evangelism, and service?”*

2. *How does the Holy Spirit “enlighten and empower the church in worship, evangelism, and service?”*

E. Question and Answer

F. Assign the class to read Section III: Man and read the passages at the end of the section.

G. Pray and dismiss.

Article III: Man

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand mankind as being made in the image of God, has separated itself from God through sin, is redeemable through the grace of Jesus and is valuable because of it having been made in God's image.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Introduction: When we use the term “man” in the Baptist Faith & Message, we will be referring not specifically to the male gender exclusively. The term “man” in this context will be referring to “mankind” or all of humanity. While we will be discussing issues of gender within the content of this session, whenever a specific gender is not expressly specified the term “man” will be employed in the same manner which the Baptist Faith & Message is referring to all humanity.

As we will see, man is made of two genders: male and female. It will be our aim to discern the complementary nature of the genders and how they reflect the good pleasure and design of God Almighty.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation.”

1. If God is primarily understood in masculine terms and described in masculine language what can it mean that both genders are equally a reflection of God's Image?

2. Because God created both male and female in His image, how should gender be understood and expressed by both male and female?

3. Why should your gender be viewed as a gift?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherited a nature and an environment inclined toward sin.”

1. Where does human sinfulness ultimately rest? Why?

2. What entity is primarily culpable for human sin entering the world?

3. Because of Adam's sin, what does this mean for the rest of humanity?

4. *What might it mean that Jesus is a “second Adam”?*

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation.”

1. *Does transgression and being under condemnation appear to occur at a certain chronological age or rather at a point of understanding and comprehending moral action?*

2. *What might this view say about our view of the idea of the “age of accountability”?*

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.”

1. *Why is the grace of God the “only” thing which can bring man fellowship with Himself?*

2. *Why is the grace of God the “only” thing which can fulfill God’s creative purposes for mankind?*

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.”

1. *What is the primary reason for valuing life at all stages?*

2. *What is the reasoning behind every race having full dignity, respect and love?*

3. *How does the Gospel speak to racism and sexism?*

F. Question and Answer

G. Assign the class to read Section IV: Salvation and read the passages at the end of the section.

H. Pray and dismiss.

Article IV: Salvation

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand God's offer of salvation includes four distinct areas: regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Introduction: Salvation is the culmination of God's redemptive work on an individual. In this session we will examine, not just the topic of salvation, but will closely examine the various aspects of the process of salvation so we might have a full and complete picture of the process God uses to redeem and restore individuals to Himself.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, "Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer."

1. Is salvation just for our souls exclusively? What does the Baptist Faith & Message claim about the Bible teaching about the work salvation accomplishes in an individual?

2. The totality of salvation is offered to what type of people?

3. How did Christ make a way for "redemption of the whole man?"

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, "salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord."

1. Are these aspects of salvation new to you? If so, how?

2. Have you thought of God using all of these different methods to bring you salvation?

3. Based on these ways God completes our salvation, when a person is truly saved what can we expect of their life?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, "Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It

is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.”

1. Most people think this is all there is to salvation. Why is this a faulty way of thinking?

2. Why are repentance and faith “inseparable experiences of grace?”

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.”

1. How does justification set us on a solid legal footing with God?

2. How does justification bring about peace and favor with God specifically?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.”

1. Usually salvation is thought of as a momentary occurrence when one accepts Christ as Savior. Why then, would sanctification be included as part of salvation?

2. How should believers understand salvation in light of sanctification?

3. What implications does this have for the one who claims to receive Christ as a small child, then never gave any thought to Christ or spiritual growth the rest of their life?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.”

1. Why is glorification part of our salvation?

2. How does glorification complete our salvation?

G. Question and Answer

H. Assign the class to read Section V: God’s Purpose of Grace and read the passages at the end of the section.

I. Pray and dismiss.

Article V: God's Purpose of Grace

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand that election is how God brings about the salvation of believers, is consistent with the freedom of mankind and is a display of God's mercy and goodness.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Introduction: In this session, we will discuss how God is Sovereignly in control of the process of salvation from regeneration to glorification. We will examine how while God is in control, man is responsible for sin. Furthermore, we will examine how the believer should behave in light of this doctrine.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners.”

1. How does election give God the power to regenerate, justify, sanctify and glorify sinners?

2. How is election essential for understanding the Sovereignty of God?

B. With regards to election, The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end.”

1. How is election consistent with man's free will? How should we properly understand man's free will in relation to God's sovereignty?

2. How should believers understand their sinful choices in relationship to God's sovereignty?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches election as “the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.”

1. How does election display “God's sovereign goodness”?

2. How would election promote humility and exclude boasting on the part of the believer?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that “all true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end.”

1. How does the doctrine of election ensure “all true believers endure to the end”?

2. Why should we trust the doctrine of election because of eternal security and vice versa?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that “believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

1. Because of the doctrine of election why might believers “fall into sin” but never lose their salvation?

2. How should it cause the believer to feel about Christ knowing the doctrine of election has both drawn them into a relationship with Christ and will never let them go from that relationship if they are truly in Christ?

F. Question and Answer

G. Assign the class to read *Section VI: The Church* and read the passages at the end of the section.

H. Pray and dismiss.

Article VI: The Church

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand the nature of a New Testament church in terms of members, ordinances, government and leadership.

Scriptural Support: Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Introduction: The Church is the Bride of Christ and the primary institution for the preaching of God’s Word, evangelism, worship, and discipleship. In this session, we will examine the nature of the Church, of whom it is comprised and those who are qualified to be its pastors.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches a “New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.”

1. What are the two qualifications for members to be a member of a local, New Testament Church? Why is this a necessary requirement?

2. Even though Southern Baptist churches for the most part adhere to the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message, why might it be that Southern Baptists hold to the local, New Testament church’s autonomy? What are the benefits of autonomy?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches Southern Baptist churches observe “two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.”

1. What are the two ordinances of the church? Why might Southern Baptist churches recognize only two ordinances where other denominations, such as Roman Catholics, recognize more ordinances?

2. Why might it be necessary for the Baptist Faith & Message to explain some of the specific functions of the New Testament church, such as what is written in this section of Article VI?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.”

1. What might be the benefits of Southern Baptist churches operating through a democratic process as opposed to a top-down, authoritarian rule by those in leadership?

2. What are the benefits of a democratic process in Southern Baptist churches to

individual members, in addition to the entire Body of Christ?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches Southern Baptist churches’ “scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.”

1. While each local, Southern Baptist church is autonomous, why would it be problematic to institute new offices within the church? What might be the potential results in adding or removing offices from the local church?

2. How does having “pastors and deacons” aid the church in fulfilling the previous statement of local, New Testament churches “operating under the Lordship of Christ through democratic process”?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches Southern Baptist church’s recognize “both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”

1. What does the senior pastor being male represent and/or illustrate about the nature of Christ and His Church? Is the office of pastor being exclusively regulated to men reflect a cultural issue of Paul’s time or something which the church is bound to follow if they are wishing to follow the command of Christ?

2. How might women find expression for their gifts and service within the local church if not allowed in the office of senior pastor?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

1. How does this statement confront individual prejudices one might hold to other races or nationalities? What might this nature of the Body of Christ teach believers about their conduct and attitude outside the church?

2. What does this statement tell about the nature of young, and possibly very young, believers in Christ? What does this statement also tell about the nature of elderly believers in Christ?

G. Question and Answer

H. Assign the class to read Section VII: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper and read the passages at the end of the section.

I. Pray and dismiss.

Article VII: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand the proper mode and reason for the two ordinances of the Church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Scriptural Support: Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

Introduction: As the Baptist Faith and Message states in Article VI, New Testament churches observe two ordinances. In this session, we will examine both ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that "christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

1. What is the necessity of immersion as opposed to other modes of baptism such as sprinkling? Is there a biblical justification for immersion of new believers over and above other modes such as sprinkling?

2. Why is baptism specifically done in the name of each member of Trinity vital for christian baptism? Why not simply baptize someone in the name of the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that christian baptism "is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead."

1. Why must baptism be viewed as a symbolic act of obedience and not one necessary for salvation? What are the potential consequences for misunderstanding baptism as anything more than a symbolic act of obedience after one's salvation experience?

2. Even though baptism is not necessary for one's salvation, why is baptism necessary for one's discipleship and testimony to the Lord? How does baptism reveal outwardly what has been accomplished inwardly?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that christian baptism "is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper."

1. Why must baptism occur before church membership or participation in the Lord's Supper?

2. What are the potential consequences of granting someone membership or access to the Lord's Supper who has not been baptized?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

1. How does the Lord's Supper anticipate Christ's second coming?

2. Why might the Baptist Faith and Message say the Lord's Supper is a “symbolic” act? Why should the New Testament church believe the “bread and the fruit of the vine” are symbolic? Does any practice of taking the Lord's Supper as non-symbolic sound familiar?

E. Question and Answer

F. Assign the class to read Section VIII: The Lord's Day and read the passages at the end of the section.

G. Pray and dismiss.

Article VIII: The Lord's Day

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand the Lord's Day as something of regular observance with other believers, as well as a commemoration of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

Introduction: Observing the Lord's Day is far more than church attendance. Observing the Lord's Day has to do with gathering together to love, encourage, support, and pray for other believers. The purpose of the Lord's Day is to hear God's Word preached, to sing to His Name in worship and respond to His call to our lives. In this session, we will examine the Lord's Day and what it should mean for believers.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "the first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance."

1. Why should the Lord's Day be a part of "regular observance" as the Baptist Faith and Message states? Why shouldn't believers view church as a monthly, quarterly, or bi-annual activity? What are the benefits of observing the Lord's Day with "regular observance"?

2. Even though believers are not expressly commanded to attend church every Sunday, why might believers see this as a display of what God has done in their hearts through Christ?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches the Lord's Day, "commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private."

1. What should we think of churches and services which do not "commemorate the resurrection of Christ from the dead" in worship? How can going to church on Sunday be a witness in itself for the Gospel?

2. How can/does what happens on Sunday influence the believer's life with Christ the rest of the week?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches, "activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

1. How does this direct churches to function in their worship planning and execution?

2. How does this statement provide the proper boundaries for Christian worship within the church?

D. Question and Answer

E. Assign the class to read *Section VIII: The Kingdom* and read the passages at the end of the section.

F. Pray and dismiss.

Article XI: The Kingdom

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand the Kingdom of God as God's rule over all creation and those who follow Him. The Kingdom of God will culminate at the return of Christ, and it is a Christian's duty to pray for His return.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

Introduction: God is not only our Savior, but He is our King. God does not rule like a President or any other elected official. God stands alone as Master over the entire universe. In this session, we will examine the Kingdom of God.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches, "the Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King."

1. According to this statement, how does God rule as King? Does one have to acknowledge His Kingship for Him to rule as King?

2. How does God rule as King over non-living things? How does God exercise His sovereignty in this way?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches, "Particularly, the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ."

1. According to this statement, can the universe have God as King, yet with individuals who are not members of His Kingdom? How can this be the case?

2. What is the requirement for admittance into the Kingdom?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches, "Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth."

1. How can a Christian labor, or work, for the Kingdom of God to come?

2. Christians pray and labor that the Kingdom may come by making what done on earth? How is this accomplished?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches, "The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age."

1. How can God be fully King over the universe yet His Kingdom not fully be consummated? How will this consummation occur?

2. *How is God's Kingdom partially consummated at this moment?*

E. Question and Answer

F. Assign the class to read *Section X: Last Things* and read the passages at the end of the section.

G. Pray and dismiss.

Article X: Last Things

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand Last Things as God bringing all things to an appropriate end in His own way. Jesus Christ will return visibly to earth and will judge all people and the righteous will reign forever with Christ.

Scriptural Support: Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

Introduction: Christians for centuries have debated, discussed and pondered the time and nature of Christ's return. Every generation of Christians believe they might be the one to see Christ return. While we don't know the date or time, there are certain things Christians can know regarding the last things. In this session, we will examine Last Things.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end."

1. Why should believers not worry about the time of Christ's return?

2. Will Jesus bring about the end in an unexpected way contrary to His Word?

Why is this a good thing for believers to know?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness."

1. How will Jesus return? Why is Jesus' personal, visible return necessary?

2. What will accompany Jesus' return to earth? Why are these things done at this point instead of any other time in history?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "the unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment."

1. Is Hell a place of consciousness? Are those in Hell aware of their situation?

2. If God indeed loves and has died for the entire world on the cross, why doesn't His blood cover everyone including unbelievers?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord".

1. *How might believers understand bodies which are resurrected and glorified?*
2. *How can believers understand the concept of eternity with Christ? What might be their “reward” in a place where they will “dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord?”*

E. Question and Answer

F. Assign the class to read *Section XI: Evangelism and Missions* and read the passages at the end of the section.

G. Pray and dismiss.

Article XI: Evangelism and Missions

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand evangelism and missions as the duty of every believer, as well as the result of their love for others and a desire for them to know Christ. Students should understand evangelism and missions are responses to the command to preach the Gospel to others and the entire world.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

Introduction: When most people think about missions, they think of foreign missions to unreached people groups in remote parts of the world. While this is a part of missions, it is one of many types and contexts for missions and for telling others about Jesus. In this session, we will examine the tenet of Evangelism and Missions.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.”

1. What is the main purpose of evangelism and missions?

2. Why would believers view evangelism and mission as both duty and privilege? How can both motivations coexist?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ.”

1. Why are evangelism and missions primarily motivated by love for others?

2. According to this passage, why might missionaries and evangelists attempt to reach groups who may have never heard the Gospel or name of Jesus?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations.”

1. Why does Jesus “command” the preaching of the Gospel? If believers are to tell people out of a desire to love them, why must God command believers to preach?

2. What does this tell us about those who have not heard the Gospel? Does it seem that the grace of Jesus covers people in their ignorance of the Gospel?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “it is the duty of every child of God to seek

constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.”

1. What does this tell us about the often cited phrase, “Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary, use words?”

2. What evangelistic and missional methods would believers consider to be “in harmony with the Gospel of Christ?”

E. Question and Answer

F. Assign the class to read *Section XII: Education* and read the passages at the end of the section.

G. Pray and dismiss.

Article XII: Education

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to understand Christ as the Source of all knowledge and wisdom and Christianity as a faith of enlightenment. Students should realize churches should support Christian education with academic freedom guided by the preeminence of Christ.

Scriptural Support: Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

Introduction: God is the creator of all of our faculties - physical, emotional and spiritual. God calls all believers to bring all their faculties under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Not only are we to be educated as believers, but how we educate ourselves and our children are important to the Lord as well. In this session, we will examine the tenet of Education.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage.”

1. What is the difference between enlightenment and intelligence? How is Christianity a faith of both realities?

2. How is it that Jesus Christ holds all the “treasures of wisdom and knowledge”?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge.”

1. What does it mean the new birth opens “all human faculties”?

2. Why does the new birth “create a thirst for knowledge”?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches.”

1. What is the purpose of education from a Christian worldview?

2. What is the church’s role in Christian education? Should the mission of the church and of Christian education be the same or completely different?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “an adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.”

1. Why would Christian education be a necessary, not simply an optional or merely beneficial, component to a complete spiritual program?

2. *What should be the definition of an “adequate system of Christian education”?*

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility.”

1. *What does a “proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility” look like for Christian educational institutions?*

2. *How do believers ascertain what is within/outside the boundaries of academic freedom in Christian educational institutions?*

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.”

1. *What does academic freedom “limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ” mean for the educator, curriculum and students?*

2. *Does education which is “limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists” mean there are subjects which are completely taboo or does it pertain to how specifically certain subjects are examined and interpreted?*

G. Question and Answer

H. Assign the class to read *Section XIII: Stewardship* and read the passages at the end of the section.

I. Pray and dismiss.

Article XIII: Stewardship

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to have a Christian view of stewardship. Students should understand God is the Source of all blessings and, therefore, believers have a spiritual debt to Christ are obligated to honor Christ with their possessions by contributing of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Introduction: When believers typically think of stewardship they usually think of the proper use of money. However, in this session, we will examine the tenet of Stewardship and how it applies to more than finances.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him.”

1. Why should “God being the source of all blessings” change how we think about our possessions?

2. How does the fact that “all that we have and are we owe to Him” influence or change how you think about your possessions and the idea of stewardship in general?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions.”

1. In addition to our finances what do believers hold in trust in which they must be good stewards?

2. How does knowing believers have a holy trusteeship in the Gospel motivate believers to use our possessions with good stewardship for the Kingdom of Christ?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches believers, “are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others.”

1. Why is stewardship viewed as an obligation? Is this the correct way to understand activities and possessions we give out of our love for Christ? Why/why not?

2. How does knowing believers have a holy trusteeship in the Gospel motivate believers to use our possessions with good stewardship for the Kingdom of Christ?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “according to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and

liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.”

1. Why is it important and necessary for believers to contribute to the “advancement of the Redeemer’s cause on earth” in non-financial ways?

2. How does being a good steward with non-financial gifts “advance the Redeemer’s cause on earth”?

E. Question and Answer

F. Assign the class to read *Section XIV: Cooperation* and read the passages at the end of the section.

G. Pray and dismiss.

Article XIV: Cooperation

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to have a proper understanding of how and for what causes believers are to cooperate with other Christian churches, associations and denominations.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

Introduction - Cooperation in the Christian context means more than simply fellowship with other believers, even though fellowship with other believers is vital to a healthy church. In this session, we will examine the tenet of Cooperation in a broad sense and discover how Christ would want his church to cooperate, both between its individual members and between churches.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God.”

1. How does the organization of associations and conventions “best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God”?

2. What might be the results of a refusal to associate and cooperate with other Gospel believing churches and organizations?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner.”

1. While other non-Southern Baptist churches might operate within a hierarchal structure, why do Southern Baptist churches elect not to use a hierarchal structure in their organizations? In Southern Baptist churches who holds the power?

2. Why is it good for church organizations to be voluntary and have advisory bodies? What are the potential issues with mandatory, managerial bodies who are able to tell each individual church what they will/will not do?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom.”

1. What is the main purpose and goal for the cooperation between New Testament churches?

2. How might this statement apply in a church-to-church scenario, as well as the individual members of specific churches?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people.”

1. How could churches define “spiritual harmony”? What does this look like when it is lived out between members of individual churches and between churches in general?

2. What would be the “common ends” which would be accomplished “by various groups of Christ’s people” in a church who practices true Christian cooperation?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.”

1. What “ends to be attained” are “justified” for cooperation between “various Christian denominations?”

2. What “ends to be attained” would not be “justified” for cooperation between “various Christian denominations?”

F. Question and Answer

G. Assign the class to read *Section XV: The Christian and the Social Order* and read the passages at the end of the section.

H. Pray and dismiss.

Article XV: The Christian and the Social Order

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to have a proper understanding of how believers are to engage and make the will of Christ supreme in human society. Students should have a proper understanding of what issues Christians should support and oppose in society.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

Introduction - Christians are not only called to live out their faith in the context of local churches and the privacy of their homes, but to effect change in society and fight for God's will in the public arena. While this is a difficult task, it is one to which all Christians are called. In this session, we will examine The Christian and the Social Order.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “all Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society.”

1. While one might understand the need to make “Christ supreme in our lives”, however, why are we commanded to make it supreme in human society?

2. How might Christ's supremacy in human society be accomplished?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that the “means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.”

1. Why is the “regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ” necessary for true, permanent improvement and “establishment of righteousness among men”?

2. What might be the result of attempting and enacting social change without the “regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ”?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography.”

1. How does one “oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography” in the “spirit of Christ”?

2. Why is being clear on both what believers stand for and vice versa important for the health of the church?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches believers “should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”

1. What does protecting the most vulnerable in society say about the Gospel?

2. How does this statement promote human flourishing for all people regardless of their religious affiliation?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.”

1. What does it mean to “bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love”?

2. How does one accomplish the task?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.”

1. What implications does this have for individual believers who work alongside unbelievers?

2. How can believers work in a “spirit of love” alongside unbelievers yet “without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth?”

G. Question and Answer

H. Assign the class to read *Section XVI: Peace and War* and read the passages at the end of the section.

I. Pray and dismiss.

Article XVI: Peace and War

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to have a proper understanding of peace and war by means of seeking peace with all men, putting an end to war in accordance and teaching of Jesus, and praying for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Scriptural Support: Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

Introduction - The topic of peace and war as a believer can be a very difficult topic to discuss. War is terrible even when fought for the most justified of reasons. Christians who are devoted to Christ have served valiantly in all wars. Christians need to have a proper understanding of peace and war in order to understand how to process, speak about and participate in war. In this session, we will examine the issue of Peace and War.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “it is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness.”

1. Why should it be the Christian’s “duty” to seek peace?

2. Does seeking peace entail achieving peace in all circumstances? When might a believer know when peace is unachievable?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.”

1. What is “the spirit and teachings of Christ” which encourage believers to put an end to war?

2. What might it mean for Christians to “do all in their power to put an end to war?”

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord.”

1. Why would the “true remedy for the spirit of war” be “the gospel of our Lord”?

2. What should the gospel do in individuals who have the power to end war?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love.”

1. How would acceptance of the teachings of Jesus positively affect “all the affairs of men and nations,” including war?

2. How does “the practical application of His law of love” put an end to “the spirit of war”?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.”

1. How does this admonition encourage believers to react when there is a possibility of war?

2. How would praying for “the reign of the Prince of Peace” be a deterrent for war and a war-like spirit?

F. Question and Answer

G. Assign the class to read *Section XVII: Religious Liberty* and read the passages at the end of the section.

H. Pray and dismiss.

Article XVII: Religious Liberty

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to have an proper understanding of religious liberty by knowing God does not constrain believers to obey laws contrary to His Word, Church and State are separate entities, and a free Church and a free State being the ideal.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

Introduction - In the entire Baptist Faith and Message there are fewer tenet which are more intensely debated, discussed and perhaps, misunderstood than the issue of religious liberty. As Americans, this tenet discusses some of our most valued freedoms and is often used to justify actions on both ends of the ideological spectrum. In this session, we will examine how the believer in Christ is to understand the issue of Religious Liberty.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it.”

1. How are believers “Free from the doctrines and commandments of men?”

2. How do believers function within a society which may operate with doctrines and commandments...which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Church and state should be separate.”

1. How might this statement be twisted to justify the removal of religion in the public arena?

2. How might believers properly interpret this tenet for those understanding it as to the removal of religious activity from any public event?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends.”

1. Why does the state “owe to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends?”

2. From a Christian standpoint does this include every church outside our denomination? Furthermore, does this statement include all places of worship which are contrary to the Christian gospel?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others.”

1. How might an “ecclesiastical group or denomination...be favored by the state

more than others?

2. Why is this reality something about which Christians should be thankful?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God.”

1. What does this say about how we are to treat leaders with whom we are in sharp disagreement, but are not asking believers to violate their Christian consciences?

2. What might be the line between civil government violating one’s personal preference versus asking someone to violate their Christian conviction?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends.”

1. In what ways are churches not to “resort to the civil powers to carry on its work”? What would be the danger in doing so?

2. What might relying on “civil powers to carry on its work” instead of letting “the gospel of Christ” be the “means alone for the pursuit of its ends” say to unbelievers?

G. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind.”

1. Why might the separation of Church and State be a beneficial idea in this case?

2. What does the state having “no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind” free believers to say? Based on this statement, what should American Christians’ attitude be toward those who may vehemently disagree with any of our doctrinal statements?

H. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion.”

1. What might be the consequences for imposing taxes in support of any form of religion?

2. Why is it a good thing taxes are not collected “for the support of any form of religion”?

I. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “a free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power”.

1. *Why is a free church in a free state the ideal? Why shouldn't the ideals of the New Testament church be the ruling law of the land?*

2. *How does this tenet protect both church and state simultaneously?*

J. Question and Answer

K. Assign the class to read *Section XVIII: The Family* and read the passages at the end of the section.

L. Pray and dismiss.

Article XVIII: The Family

Learning Objective: The objective of this session is for students to have a proper understanding of the family as the foundational institution of human society, the proper context of marriage and family, how members of families are to relate to one another, as well as what marriage and family are to represent.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Introduction - The definition of family seems to have undergone many changes in recent decades. There are many ideas which are at odds with the family as God has defined it in Scripture. It is important for Christians to have a proper understanding of the family unit as God intends. In this session, we will examine the Family.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society.”

1. Why would God “ordain the family as the foundational institution of human society”?

2. What are the implications of God “ordaining the family as the foundational institution of human society”?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches the family “is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.”

1. Why does marriage and adoption fall under the definition of family if they are not related by blood? What do these relationships say about the gospel?

2. What does family being a relationship by “marriage, blood or adoption” say about how Christians should function in marriages and families?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.”

1. What is the difference between a covenantal marriage relationship and a contractual marriage relationship?

2. Why does the term “lifetime” matter in terms of a covenantal marriage relationship?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches marriage “is God's unique gift to reveal the

union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.”

- 1. What does the gift of marriage reveal?*
- 2. What is the ultimate purpose of marriage?*

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches in marriage “the husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image.”

- 1. What gives the man and woman equal value?*
- 2. Why should believers hold to gender roles if both sexes are created equal?*

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people.”

- 1. How is the marriage relationship a model for “the way God relates to His people”?*
- 2. If this statement from the Baptist Faith and Message is true, what might the breaking of marriage relationships be saying to the unbelieving world?*

G. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family.”

- 1. What are the primary responsibilities for the husband?*
- 2. How is this role reflected in the Trinity?*

H. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “a wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.”

- 1. What are the primary responsibilities for the wife?*
- 2. How is this role reflected in the Trinity?*

I. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches the wife “being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.”

- 1. Why might this doctrine be heavily contested?*
- 2. How does this role work in perfect harmony with the responsibilities of the husband?*

J. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage.”

1. From what point does God view the beginning of human personhood and value?

2. Why do children require a daily-modeled, Godly pattern for marriage?

K. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth.”

1. Who bears the responsibility for a child's spiritual growth and understanding?

2. What values are parents supposed to be instilling in their children according to this tenet? Why are these items of the highest value for parents to model for their children?

L. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “children are to honor and obey their parents.”

1. What does it mean to honor one's parents? Is there an age limit attached to this command?

2. What does it mean to obey one's parents? Is there an age limit attached to this command?

M. Question and Answer

N. Instruct the class to reread their *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* before next week's post-survey. Thank them for attending this series on the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.

O. Pray and dismiss.

APPENDIX 5

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE STUDENT WORKBOOK

Outline of Each Section of the Workbook

Each section in the workbook on the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message consists of five sections:

1. The Main Point: What are the main ideas we should take from this section?
2. Introduction (Scripture and Introduction Statement)
3. Statements and questions on the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message
4. Personal Application
5. “Notes, Questions and Reflection” page for journaling and note taking

How to Best Utilize This Workbook

Every section in this workbook examines one Article of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. Concentrating on one Article per session provides you an opportunity to focus on individual tenets. Focusing on one Article per week allows you to read each tenet multiple times during the week, as well as all relative Scripture passages provided by the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

All sessions have questions which will be examined during the lecture time. After each question, I have provided space to write answers to the questions which are asked. After you have read the Article, all relevant Scripture passages, and have completed your questions, there is a space provided for you to apply what you have read and studied to your life. Do not skim over these questions. Take some time and think about how these Scriptures and the doctrines from which may apply to your life today.

At the end of each section, there is a separate sheet titled, “Notes, Questions and Reflections.” This page is for you to write questions from your reading, questions you may have for the in-class lecture, as well as reflections, insights, and conclusions regarding your reading and in-class lecture.

Sections in this workbook do not have to be completed in one sitting, day or specific time frame. For example, you may want to use the curriculum in the following fashion.

Monday:

1. Pray God will guide you in the study of his Word and grant you an increased love for Him and His church.
2. Read the Article in the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message which will be discussed.
3. Read all relevant passages outlined in your workbook and the Baptist Faith & Message.
4. Journal your notes, questions and reflections on the sheet provided at the end of each section on the Article and/or Scriptures you just read.

Tuesday - Saturday:

1. Pray God will guide you in the study of his Word and grant you an increased love for Him and His church.
2. Reread the Article to be discussed, think and work through the questions on the Article, writing answers in the space provided.
3. Journal your notes, questions and reflections on the sheet provided at the end of each section regarding your feelings and insights.

If you wish or need further discussion, follow-up, or clarification on certain aspects of the material or lecture, I am always available by phone, conversation or email.

Article I: The Scriptures

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand the Bible is inerrant, true, trustworthy, eternal and is God’s revelation to mankind with its main focus on Jesus Christ.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Introduction: When we talk about the Scriptures, both in worship and throughout this series, we will be specifically learning about the canon of 66 books of Scripture contained in the Holy Bible. We will not be including in our discussion what are commonly referred to as the Apocryphal books of Scripture included in the Catholic canon of Scripture.

A. The Baptist Faith and Messages says, “The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man.”

1. What does it mean that Scripture was inspired by God, yet written by men?

2. Even though it was men who penned the Scripture, Who is in control of what is written?

3. How can God control what is written yet still have the author’s writing style and personality revealed in the text?

4. What does it mean when the Baptist Faith & Message says the Bible “is God’s revelation of Himself to man?”

5. How does the authority of Scripture differ from the authority of the pastor or any church official’s words?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Scripture “has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.”

1. According to the Baptist Faith & Message, what is the chief end of the Bible for mankind?

2. What is the difference between something which contains truths, or is truth versus something which claims it is Truth in and of itself?

3. How does the Baptist Faith & Message speak of the Bible’s claim about itself? Does the Baptist Faith & Message claim the Bible contains truths or instead that the Bible itself is Truth?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message draws the conclusion, “Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”

1. Why does the Bible and the Baptist Faith & Message claim Scripture is completely true?

2. Why does the Bible and the Baptist Faith & Message claim Scripture is completely trustworthy?

3. What does it mean to “trust” the Bible?

4. Do we trust the Scripture the same way we trust Jesus?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible will “remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.”

1. What are some implications of God’s Word being eternal?

2. What are some implications of God’s Word being the supreme standard of human conduct?

3. What are some implications of God’s Word being the standard by which we draw all our theological statements?

4. What are some implications of God’s Word being the standard by which all religious opinions should be judged?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims, “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”

1. Who is the focal person of the Scripture?

2. If this is true, what is the primary object of the Scriptures - both Old and New Testament?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article II: God

The Main Point: The main point of this section is to help you understand that God is living, true, intelligent, spiritual and personal as well as understand God is Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, Ruler, holy, all-knowing, all-powerful and eternal.

Introduction: When we talk about God in this series and specifically in this lesson, we are talking about the God of the Bible. We are not referencing any other deity or claiming anything about any other religions' view of god. In this section, we are specifically discussing the three Persons of what is known as the Trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, "There is only one and only one living and true God."

1. Why is the exclusivity of God the Father being the only God (monotheistic) necessary for the believer in Christ? Why can't a person hold to a polytheistic theology and still have faith in Christ?

2. Why does God have to be the "true" God necessary for a person to be a Christian? Why can't a person believe in Christ, yet still believe that perhaps an Islamic or Hindu view of God is more accurate?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God "is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being."

1. What does it mean for God to be each of these things respectively?

2. To what extent is God intelligent, spiritual, and personal?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God, “is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe.”

1. What does it mean for God to be each of these things respectively?

2. To what extent is God the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of the universe?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God “is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.”

1. What does it mean for God to be infinite in holiness?

2. To what might the term “all other perfections” be referring?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches “God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures.”

1. What does it mean for God to be truly omniscient?

2. What does it mean for God to be truly omnipotent?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God, “The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.”

1. What does it mean the Trinity is not divided in nature, essence or being”?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article II: God - Points A-C

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand God is represented equally in three Persons: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Introduction: When we talk about God in this series, specifically in this section, we are talking about the God of the Bible. We are not referencing any other deity or claiming anything about any other religions' view of god. In this session, we are specifically discussing the three Persons of what is known as the Trinity: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God the Father

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God the Father has overarching reign over the universe, creation, history “according to the purposes of His grace.”

1. What can a Christian conclude about God's power and authority from this statement?

2. Why can a believer have increased confidence in God and not less because of this reality about God the Father?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Father “is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.”

1. What does it mean for the believer knowing that God the Father is not only omnipotent and omniscient, but also all loving and all wise?

2. How does this increase the believer's trust that God exercises His authority correctly?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Father “is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.”

1. Even though God is providential Ruler over all, the only ones who have the right to call God “Father” are whom?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Father “is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.”

1. How can God the Father be Ruler and Master over all persons, yet at the same time not be called their “Father?”

God the Son

Scriptural Support: Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God the Son “is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.”

1. How has Jesus always been eternal? Is there a difference between Jesus always existing and His bodily form?

2. Why does Jesus have to be eternal?

3. *Why did Jesus have to be born of a woman and the Holy Spirit?*

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Son is “perfectly revealed and did the will of God” and identified “Himself completely with mankind yet without sin.”

1. *How did Jesus perfectly reveal and do the will of God?*

2. *How is it possible to “identify with mankind,” but do so “without sin?”*

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that by God the Son’s “substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion.”

1. *Why was Jesus the only one who could make this provision?*

2. *What was the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body? Is the bodily resurrection meant to be understood literally?*

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Son “ascended into heaven,” “at the right hand of God,” “is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is affected the reconciliation between God and man.”

1. *What does Jesus’ current physical location say about Him?*

2. *What are the implications of Jesus being the only Mediator between God and man?*

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Son “will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.”

1. Why is the nature of Jesus’ return so drastically opposite of His first coming?

2. Why does Jesus have the right to judge the world?

3. Why is the judgement the final act of His redemptive mission?

4. What is the significance of Christ’s indwelling of believers?

The Holy Spirit

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Holy Spirit “inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures.”

1. Who is in control of the writing of Scriptures?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches God the Holy Spirit “exalts Christ...convicts of sin, righteousness and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration...baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ...cultivates Christian character, comforts believers...bestows the spiritual gifts and seals the believer unto the day of final redemption.”

1. According to this list, what might the role of the Holy Spirit be for believers in Christ?

2. Why might the Holy Spirit’s role be often overlooked?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches this about God the Holy Spirit “His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ.”

1. How might the presence of the Holy Spirit be a “guarantee” that God will do in them what He said He would do?

2. How might we tell if the Holy Spirit is working/present in our lives?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches that God the Holy Spirit “enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.”

1. How does the Holy Spirit “enlighten and empower the believer in worship, evangelism, and service”?

2. How does the Holy Spirit “enlighten and empower the church in worship, evangelism, and service”?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article III: Man

The Main Point: The main point of this session is for you to understand humans are made in the image of God, have separated themselves from God through sin, are redeemable through the grace of Jesus. Humans are valuable because of our being made in God’s image.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Introduction: When we use the term “man” in the Baptist Faith & Message, we will be referring not specifically to the male gender exclusively. The term “man” in this context will be referring to “mankind” or all of humanity. While we will be using discussing issues of gender within the content of this session, whenever a specific gender is not expressly specified the term “man” will be employed in the same manner which the Baptist Faith & Message is referring to all humanity.

As we will see, man is made of two genders: male and female. It will be our aim to discern the complementary nature of the genders and how they reflect the good pleasure and design of God Almighty.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches humans are, “made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation.”

1. If God is primarily understood in masculine terms and described in masculine language, what can it mean that both genders are equally a reflection of God’s Image?

2. Because God created both male and female in His image, how should gender be understood and expressed by both male and female?

3. Why should your gender be viewed as a gift?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin.”

1. Where does human sinfulness ultimately rest? Why?

2. What entity is primarily culpable for human sin entering the world?

3. Because of Adam’s sin, what does that mean for the rest of humanity?

4. What might it mean that Jesus is a “second Adam”?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation.”

1. Does transgression of God’s law and being under condemnation appear to occur at a certain chronological age or rather at a point of understanding and comprehending moral action?

2. What might this view say about our view of the idea “age of accountability”?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.”

1. Why is the grace of God the “only” thing which can bring man fellowship with Himself?

2. Why is the grace of God the “only” thing which can fulfill God’s creative purposes for mankind?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches, “The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.”

1. What is the primary reason for valuing life at all stages?

2. What is the reasoning behind every race having full dignity, respect and love?”

3. How does the Gospel speak to racism and sexism?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article IV: Salvation

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand salvation includes four distinct areas: regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Introduction: Salvation is the culmination of God’s redemptive work on an individual. In this section we will examine, not just the topic of salvation, but will closely examine the various aspects of salvation so we might have a full and complete picture of the process God uses to redeem and restore individuals to Himself.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches “Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer.”

1. Is salvation just for our souls exclusively? What does the Baptist Faith & Message claim about the Bible’s teaching about the work salvation accomplishes in an individual?

2. The totality of salvation is offered to what type of people?

3. How did Christ make a way for “redemption of the whole man”?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches “salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.”

1. Are these aspects of salvation new to you? If so, how?

2. Have you thought of God using all of these different methods to bring you to salvation?

3. Based on these ways God completes our salvation, when a person is truly saved what can we expect of their life?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches “Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.”

1. Most people think this is all there is to salvation. Why is this a faulty way of thinking?

2. Why are repentance and faith “inseparable experiences of grace”?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches “Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.”

1. How does justification set us on a solid legal footing with God?

2. How does justification bring about peace and favor with God specifically?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches “Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.”

1. Usually salvation is thought of as a momentary occurrence when one accepts Christ as Savior. Why, then, would sanctification be included as part of salvation?

2. How should believers understand salvation in light of sanctification?

3. What implications does this have for the one who claims to receive Christ as a small child, then never gave any thought to Christ or spiritual growth the rest of their life?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message claims the Bible teaches “Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.”

1. Why is glorification part of our salvation?

2. How does glorification complete our salvation?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article V: God's Purpose of Grace

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand election as part of how God brings about the salvation of believers, how it is consistent with the freedom of individuals, and is a display of God's mercy and goodness.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Introduction: In this section, we discuss how God is in Sovereign control of the process of salvation from regeneration to glorification. We will examine how while God is in control, man is responsible for sin. Furthermore, we will examine how the believer should behave in light of this doctrine.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners."

1. How does election give God the power to regenerate, justify, sanctify, and glorify sinners?

2. How is election essential for understanding the Sovereignty of God?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that election is "consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end."

1. How is election consistent with man's free will? How should we properly understand man's free will in relation to God's sovereignty?

2. How should believers understand their sinful choices in relationship to God's sovereignty?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches election as “the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.”

1. How does election display “God’s sovereign goodness”?

2. How would election promote humility and exclude boasting on the part of the believer?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that “all true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end.”

1. How does the doctrine of election ensure “all true believers endure to the end”?

2. Why should we trust the doctrine of election in light of eternal security and vice versa?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that “believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

1. Because of the doctrine of election, why might believers “fall into sin” but never lose their salvation?

2. How should it cause the believer to feel about Christ knowing the doctrine of election has both drawn them into a relationship with Christ and will never let them go from that relationship if they are truly in Christ?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article VI: The Church

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand what members, ordinances, government, and leadership consist of in a New Testament church.

Scriptural Support: Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Introduction: The Church is the Bride of Christ and the primary institution for the preaching of God’s Word, evangelism, worship, and discipleship. In this section, we will examine the nature of the Church, of whom it is comprised, and those who are qualified to be its pastors.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches a “New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.”

1. What are the two qualifications for members to be a member of a local, New Testament Church? Why is this a necessary requirement?

2. Even though Southern Baptist churches for the most part, adhere to the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message, why might it be that Southern Baptists hold to the local, New Testament church’s autonomy? What are the benefits of autonomy?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches Southern Baptist churches observe “two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.”

1. What are the two ordinances of the church? Why might Southern Baptist churches recognize only two ordinances where other denominations, such as Roman Catholics, recognize more ordinances?

2. Why might it be necessary for the Baptist Faith & Message to explain some of the specific functions of the New Testament church, such as what is written this section of Article VI?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.”

1. What might be the benefits of Southern Baptist churches operating through a democratic process as opposed to top-down, authoritarian rule by those in leadership?

2. What are the benefits of a democratic process in Southern Baptist churches to individual members, in addition to the entire Body of Christ?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that a Southern Baptist church’s “scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.”

1. While each local, Southern Baptist church is autonomous, why would it be problematic to institute new offices within the church? What might be the potential results in adding or removing offices from the local church?

2. How does having “pastors and deacons” aid the church in fulfilling the previous statement of local, New Testament churches “operating under the Lordship of Christ through democratic process”?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches while a Southern Baptist church recognizes “both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”

1. What does the senior pastor being male represent and/or illustrate about the nature of Christ and His Church? Is the office of pastor being exclusively regulated to men reflect a cultural issue of Paul’s time or something which the church is bound to follow if they are wishing to follow the command of Christ?

2. How might women find expression for their gifts and service within the local church if not allowed in the office of senior pastor?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

1. How does this statement confront individual prejudices one might hold to other races or nationalities? What might this nature of the Body of Christ teach believers about their conduct and attitude outside the church?

2. What does this statement tell about the nature of young, and possibly very young, believers in Christ? What does this statement also tell about the nature of elderly believers in Christ?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article VII: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand the two ordinances of the Church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Scriptural Support: Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

Introduction: As the Baptist Faith and Message states in Article VI, New Testament churches observe two ordinances. In this section, we will examine both ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that "Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

1. What is the necessity of immersion as opposed to other modes of baptism such as sprinkling? Is there a biblical justification for immersion of new believers over and above other modes such as sprinkling?

2. Why is baptism specifically done in the name of each member of the Trinity vital for Christian baptism? Why not simply baptize someone in the name of the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that Christian baptism "is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead."

1. Why must baptism be viewed as a symbolic act of obedience and not one necessary for salvation? What are the potential consequences for misunderstanding baptism as a symbolic act of obedience for what is necessary for one's salvation?

2. Even though baptism is not necessary for one's salvation, why is baptism necessary for one's discipleship and testimony to the Lord? How does baptism reveal outwardly what has been accomplished inwardly?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that Christian baptism “is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.”

1. Why must baptism occur before church membership or participation in the Lord's Supper?

2. What are the potential consequences of granting someone membership or access to the Lord's Supper who has not been baptized?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

1. How does the Lord's Supper anticipate Christ's second coming?

2. Why might the Baptist Faith and Message say the Lord's Supper is a “symbolic” act? Why should the New Testament church believe the “bread and the fruit of the vine” is symbolic? Does any practice of taking the Lord's Supper as non-symbolic sound familiar?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article VIII: The Lord's Day

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand that observing the Lord's Day is something which should be done regularly with other believers as well as a celebration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

Introduction: Observing the Lord's Day is far more than church attendance. Observing the Lord's Day has to do with gathering together to love, encourage, support, and pray for other believers. The Lord's Day is to hear God's Word preached, to sing to His Name in worship and respond to His calling on our lives. In this section, we will examine the Lord's Day and what it should mean for believers.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches that "the first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance."

1. Why should the Lord's Day be a part of "regular observance" as the Baptist Faith and Message states. Why shouldn't believers view church as a monthly, quarterly, or bi-annual activity? What are the benefits of observing the Lord's Day with "regular observance"?

2. Even though believers are not expressly commanded to attend church every Sunday, why might believers see this as a display of what God has done in their hearts through Christ?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches the Lord's Day, "commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private."

1. What should we think of churches and services which do not "commemorate the resurrection of Christ from the dead" in worship? How can going to church on Sunday be a witness in itself for the Gospel?

2. How can/does what happens on Sunday influence the believer's life with Christ the rest of the week?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”

1. How does this direct churches to function in their worship planning and execution?

2. How does this statement provide the proper boundaries for Christian worship within the church?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article IX: The Kingdom

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand the term “Kingdom of God” as God’s rule over all creation and those who follow Him. The Kingdom of God will culminate at the return of Christ, and it is our duty as Christians to pray for His return.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

Introduction: God is not only our Savior, but He is our King. God does not rule like a President or any other elected official. God stands alone as Master over the entire universe. In this section, we will examine the Kingdom of God.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King.”

1. According to this statement, how does God rule as King? Does one have to acknowledge His Kingship for Him to rule as King?

2. How does God rule as King over non-living things? How does God exercise His sovereignty in this way?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.”

1. According to this statement, can the universe have God as King, with individuals who are not members of His Kingdom? How can this be the case?

2. What is the requirement for admittance into the Kingdom?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth.”

1. How can a Christian labor, or work, for the Kingdom of God to come?

2. Christians pray and labor that the Kingdom may come by making what done on earth? How is this accomplished?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.”

1. How can God be fully King over the universe yet His Kingdom not fully be consummated? How will this consummation occur?

2. How is God's Kingdom partially consummated at this moment?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article X: Last Things

The Main Point: The main point of this session is for students to understand Last Things as God bringing all things to an appropriate end in the way God seems fit. Jesus Christ will return visibly to earth and will judge all people and Christians will reign forever with Christ.

Scriptural Support: Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

Introduction: Christians for centuries have debated, discussed, and pondered the time and nature of Christ's return. Every generation of Christians believe they might be the one to see Christ return. While we don't know the date or time, there are certain things Christians can know regarding the last things. In this section, we will examine Last Things.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end."

1. Why should believers not worry about the time of Christ's return?

2. Will Jesus bring about the end in an unexpected way contrary to His Word? Why is this a good thing for believers to know?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches "According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness."

1. How will Jesus return? Why is Jesus' personal, visible return necessary?

2. What will accompany Jesus' return to earth? Why are these things done at this point instead of any other time in history?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.”

1. Is Hell a place of consciousness? Are those in Hell aware of their situation?

2. If God indeed loves and died for the entire world on the cross, why doesn't His blood cover everyone including unbelievers?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.”

1. How might believers understand bodies which are resurrected and glorified?

2. How can believers understand the concept of eternity with Christ? What might be their “reward” in a place where they will “dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord?”

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XI: Evangelism and Missions

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand evangelism and missions are duties of every believer, as well as the result of our love for others and a desire for them to know Christ. You should understand evangelism and missions are responses to the command to preach the Gospel to others and the entire world.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

Introduction: When most people think about missions, they think of foreign missions to unreached people groups in remote parts of the world. While this is a part of missions, it is one of many types and contexts for missions and for telling others about Jesus. In this section, we will examine the tenet of Evangelism and Missions.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.”

1. What is the main purpose of evangelism and missions?

2. Why would believers view evangelism and missions as both duty and privilege? How can both motivations coexist?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ.”

1. Why are evangelism and missions primarily motivated by love for others?

2. According to this passage, why might missionaries and evangelists attempt to reach groups who may have never heard the Gospel or name of Jesus?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations.”

1. Why does Jesus “command” the preaching of the Gospel? If believers are to tell people out of a desire to love them, why must God command believers to preach?

2. What does this tell us about those who have not heard the Gospel? Does it seem that the grace of Jesus covers people in their ignorance of the Gospel?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “it is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.”

1. What does this tell us about the often cited phrase, “Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary, use words?”

2. What evangelistic and missional methods would believers consider to be “in harmony with the Gospel of Christ”?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XII: Education

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to understand Christ is the Source of all knowledge and wisdom and that Christianity is a faith of enlightenment. You should also understand churches should support Christian education with academic freedom guided by the principle Christ is the foundation of all knowledge and wisdom.

Scriptural Support: Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

Introduction: God is the creator of all of our faculties - physical, spiritual, emotional and spiritual. God calls all believers to bring all their faculties under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Not only are we to be educated as believers, but how we educate ourselves and our children are important to the Lord as well. In this section, we will examine the tenet of education.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage.”

1. What is the difference between enlightenment and intelligence? How is Christianity a faith of both realities?

2. How is it that Jesus Christ holds all the “treasures of wisdom and knowledge”?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge.”

1. What is meant by the new birth opens “all human faculties?”

2. Why does the new birth “create a thirst for knowledge”?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches.”

1. What is the purpose of education from a Christian worldview?

2. What is the church’s role in Christian education? Should the mission of the church and of Christian education be the same or completely different?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “an adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.”

1. Why would Christian education be a necessary, not simply an optional or merely beneficial, component to a complete spiritual program?

2. What should be the definition of an “adequate system of Christian education”?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility.”

1. What does a “proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility” look like for Christian educational institutions?

2. How do believers ascertain what is within/outside the boundaries of academic freedom in Christian educational institutions?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.”

1. What does academic freedom “limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ” mean for the educator, curriculum, and students?

2. Does education which is “limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists” mean there are subjects which are completely taboo or does it pertain to how specifically certain subjects are examined and interpreted?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XIII: Stewardship

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to have a Christian view of stewardship. You should understand God is the Source of all blessings and, therefore, believers owe a spiritual debt to Christ. You should understand believers are obligated to honor Christ with their possessions by contributing of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Introduction: When believers typically think of stewardship, they usually think of the proper use of money. However, in this section, we will examine the tenet of stewardship and how it applies to more than finances.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him.”

1. Why should “God being the source of all blessings” change how we think about our possessions?

2. How does the fact that “all that we have and are we owe to Him” influence or change how you think about your possessions and the idea of stewardship in general?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions.”

1. In addition to our finances what do believers hold in trust in which they must be good stewards?

2. How does knowing believers have a holy trusteeship in the Gospel motivate believers to use our possessions with good stewardship for the Kingdom of Christ?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches believers, “are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others.”

1. Why is stewardship viewed as an obligation? Is this the correct way to understand activities and possessions we give out of our love for Christ? Why/why not?

2. How does knowing believers have a holy trusteeship in the Gospel motivate believers to use our possessions with good stewardship for the Kingdom of Christ?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “according to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.”

1. Why is it important and necessary for believers to contribute to the “advancement of the Redeemer’s cause on earth” in non-financial ways?

2. How does being a good steward with non-financial gifts “advance the Redeemer’s cause on earth”?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XIV: Cooperation

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to have a correct understanding of how and for what causes Christians are to cooperate with other Christian churches, associations and denominations.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

Introduction - Cooperation in the Christian context means more than simply fellowship with other believers, even though fellowship with other believers is vital to a healthy church. In this section, we will examine the tenet of cooperation in a broad sense and discover how Christ would want his church to cooperate, both between its individual members and between churches.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God.”

1. How does the organization of associations and conventions “best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God”?

2. What might be the results of a refusal to associate and cooperate with other Gospel believing churches and organizations?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner.”

1. While other non-Southern Baptist churches might operate within a hierarchal structure, why do Southern Baptist churches elect not to use a hierarchal structure in their organizations? In Southern Baptist churches, who holds the power?

2. Why is it good for church organizations to be voluntary and have advisory bodies? What are the potential issues with mandatory, managerial bodies who are able to tell each individual church what they will/will not do?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom.”

1. What is the main purpose and goal for the cooperation between New Testament churches?

2. How might this statement apply in a church-to-church scenario, as well as the individual members of specific churches?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ’s people.”

1. How could churches define “spiritual harmony”? What does this look like when it is lived out between members of individual churches and between churches in general?

2. What would be the “common ends” which would be accomplished “by various groups of Christ’s people” in a church which practices true Christian cooperation?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.”

1. What “ends to be attained” are “justified” for cooperation between “various Christian denominations”?

2. What “ends to be attained” would not be “justified” for cooperation between “various Christian denominations”?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XV: The Christian and the Social Order

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to have an correct understanding of how believers are to interact within society and make the will of Christ supreme in human society. You should have a better understanding of what issues Christians should support and oppose in society.

Scriptural Support: Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

Introduction - Christians are not only called to live out their faith in the context of local churches and the privacy of their homes. Christians are called to effect change in society and fight for God’s will in the public arena. While this is a difficult task, it is one to which all Christians are called. In this section, we will examine “The Christian and the Social Order.”

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “all Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society.”

1. While one might understand the need to make “Christ supreme in our lives,” why are we commanded to make it supreme in human society?

2. How might Christ’s supremacy in human society be accomplished?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches the “means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.”

1. Why is the “regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ” necessary for true, permanent improvement and “establishment of righteousness among men”?

2. *What might be the result of attempting and enacting social change without the “regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ”?*

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography.”

1. *How does one “oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography” in the “spirit of Christ”?*

2. *Why does being clear on both what believers stand for and vice versa important for the health of the church?*

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches believers “should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”

1. *What does protecting the most vulnerable in society say about the Gospel?*

2. *How does this statement promote human flourishing for all people regardless of their religious affiliation?*

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.”

1. *What does it mean to “bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love”? How does one accomplish the task?*

2. How does one accomplish the task?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.”

1. What implications does this have for individual believers who work alongside unbelievers?

2. How can believers work in a “spirit of love” alongside unbelievers “without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth?”

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XVI: Peace and War

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to have an proper understanding of peace and war. You should understand Christ calls believers to seek peace with all men and put an end to war in accordance and teaching of Jesus, as well as praying for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Scriptural Support: Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

Introduction - The topic of peace and war as a believer can be a very difficult topic to discuss. While war is terrible even when fought for the most justified of reasons. Christians who are devoted to Christ have served valiantly in all wars. Christians need to have a proper understanding of peace and war in order to understand how to process, speak about and participate in war. In this section, we will examine the issue of Peace and War.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “it is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness.”

1. Why should it be the Christian’s “duty” to seek peace?

2. Does seeking peace entail achieving peace in all circumstances? When might a believer know when peace is unachievable?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.”

1. What is “the spirit and teachings of Christ” which encourage believers to put an end to war?

2. What might it mean for Christians to “do all in their power to put an end to war”?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord.”

1. Why would the “true remedy for the spirit of war” be “the gospel of our Lord”?

2. What does the gospel do in individuals which could end war if accepted by all peoples and nations?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love.”

1. How would acceptance of the teachings of Jesus positively affect “all the affairs of men and nations”, including war?

2. How does “the practical application of the His law of love” put an end to “the spirit of war”?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.”

1. How does this admonition encourage believers to react when there is a possibility of war?

2. How would praying for “the reign of the Prince of Peace” be a deterrent for war and a war-like spirit?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XVII: Religious Liberty

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to have an proper understanding of religious liberty. You should understand God does not constrain believers to obey laws contrary to His Word, Church and State are separate entities, and a free Church and a free State are the ideal.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

Introduction - In the entire Baptist Faith and Message there are fewer tenets which are more intensely debated, discussed, and perhaps, misunderstood than the issue of religious liberty. As Americans, this tenet discusses some of our most valued freedoms and is often used to justify actions on both ends of the ideological spectrum. In this section, we will examine how the believer in Christ is to understand the issue of Religious Liberty.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it.”

1. How are believers “free from the doctrines and commandments of men”?

2. How do believers function within a society which may operate with “doctrines and commandments” ... “which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it”?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “Church and state should be separate.”

1. How might this statement be twisted to justify the removal religion in the public arena?

2. How might believers properly interpret this tenet for those understanding it as to the removal of religious activity from any public event?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends.”

1. Why does the state “owe to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends”?

2. From a Christian standpoint, does this include every church outside our denomination? Furthermore, does this statement include all places of worship which are contrary to the Christian gospel?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “in providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others.”

1. How might an “ecclesiastical group or denomination...be favored by the state more than others?

2. Why is this reality something about which Christians should be thankful?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God.”

1. What does this say about how we are to treat leaders with whom we are in sharp disagreement, but are not asking believers to violate their Christian conscience?

2. What might be the line between civil government violating one’s personal preference versus asking someone to violate their Christian conviction?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends.”

1. In what ways are churches not to “resort to the civil powers to carry on its work” What would be the danger in doing so?

2. What might relying “on civil powers to carry on its work” instead of letting “the gospel of Christ” be the “means alone for the pursuit of its ends” say to unbelievers?

G. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind.”

1. Why might the separation of Church and State be a beneficial idea in this case?

2. What does the state having “no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind” free believers to say? Based on this statement, what should American Christians’ attitude be toward those who may vehemently disagree with any of our doctrinal statements?

H. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion.”

1. Why might the consequences for an imposition of taxes for support any form of religion?

2. Why is it a good thing taxes are not collected “for the support of any form of religion”?

I. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “a free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.”

1. Why is a free church in a free state the ideal? Why shouldn't the ideals of the New Testament church be the ruling law of the land?

2. How does this tenet protect both church and state simultaneously?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

Article XVIII: The Family

The Main Point: The main point of this section is for you to have an proper understanding of the family as the foundational institution of human society, the only proper context for marriage and the family, how members of families are to relate to one another, as well as what marriage and family are to represent.

Scriptural Support: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Introduction - The definition of family seems to have undergone many changes in recent decades. There are many ideas which are at odds with the family as God has defined it in Scripture. It is important for Christians to have a proper understanding of the family unit as God intends. In this section, we will examine the Family.

A. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society.”

1. Why would God “ordain the family as the foundational institution of human society”?

2. What are the implications of God “ordaining the family as the foundational institution of human society”?

B. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches the family “is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.”

1. Why does marriage and adoption fall under the definition of family if they are not related by blood? What do these relationships says about the gospel?

2. What does family being a relationship by “marriage, blood, or adoption” say about how Christians should function in marriages and families?

C. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.”

1. What is the difference between a covenantal marriage relationship and a contractual marriage relationship?

2. Why does the term “lifetime” matter in terms of a covenantal marriage relationship?

D. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches marriage “is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.”

1. What does the gift of marriage reveal?

2. What is the ultimate purpose of marriage?

E. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches in marriage “the husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image.”

1. What gives the man and woman equal value?

2. Why should believers hold to gender roles if both sexes are created equal?

F. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “the marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people.”

1. How is the marriage relationship a model for “the way God relates to His people”?

2. *If this statement from the Baptist Faith and Message is true, what might the breaking of marriage relationships be saying to the unbelieving world?*

G. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family.”

1. *What are the primary responsibilities for the husband?*

2. *How is this role reflected in the Trinity?*

H. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “a wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.”

1. *What are the primary responsibilities for the wife?*

2. *How is this role reflected in the Trinity?*

I. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches the wife “being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.”

1. *Why might this doctrine be heavily contested?*

2. *How is this role work in perfect harmony with the responsibilities of the husband?*

J. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage.”

1. From what point should believers view the beginning of human personhood and value?

2. Why do children require a daily-modeled, Godly pattern for marriage?

K. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth.”

1. Who bears the responsibility for a child’s spiritual growth and understanding?

2. What values are parents supposed to be instilling in their children according to this tenet? Why are these items of the highest value for parents to model for their children?

L. The Baptist Faith & Message teaches “children are to honor and obey their parents.”

1. What does it mean to honor one’s parents? Is there an age limit attached to this command?

2. What does it mean to obey one’s parents? Is there an age limit attached to this command?

Notes, Questions and Reflections

APPENDIX 6

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE: A STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, JUNE 14, 2000

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against

God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and

comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's

spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31;

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AND TEACHING AN ADULT CURRICULUM ON *THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE*, HIGHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH, TULLAHOMA, TENNESSEE

Stephen Matthew Keene, D.Ed.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Anthony W. Foster

This project examines the need for the theological training of adults in Southern Baptist churches using the 2000 version of *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

Chapter 1 explains the goals, ministry context, rationale, definitions, limitations and delimitations, and methodology of the project, thereby revealing the need for a series on Southern Baptist doctrine at Highland Baptist Church.

Chapter 2 provides a scriptural and theological justification for believers to know and understand doctrine.

Chapter 3 provides the practical implications for Christians to know and understand doctrine.

Chapter 4 examines the project implementation where adults are led through a thirteen-week series on *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

The project concludes in chapter 5 with an examination of conclusions, evidence of findings, and an evaluation of the overall project.

Appendices provide charts, curriculum, pre/post-series surveys and the 2000 version of *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

VITA

Stephen Matthew Keene

EDUCATIONAL

B.S., Mid-Continent University, 2003

M.A.C.E., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006

MINISTERIAL

Minister of Students, Pleasureville Baptist Church, Pleasureville, Kentucky,
2006-2009

Minister of Students and Education, Highland Baptist Church, Tullahoma,
Tennessee, 2010-