

WHAT WE BELIEVE – WEEK 1

Why a Doctrinal Statement & God

BIBLE STUDY

WHY A DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

GET THINKING!

1. What value do you think there might be in a church having a doctrinal statement?

LOOKING AT THE BIBLE

25 "And now I know that none of you among whom I went around proclaiming the kingdom will see me again. 26 Therefore I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of you all. 27 For I did not hold back from announcing to you the whole purpose of God. 28 Watch out for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. 29 I know that after I am gone fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Even from among your own group men will arise, teaching perversions of the truth to draw the disciples away after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears. 32 And now I entrust you to God and to the message of his grace. This message is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:25-32 NET)

This is part of Paul's teaching to the church leaders at Ephesus (see vv.17-18) which he planted (see Acts 19:1-10).

1. What did Paul do to protect the church in Ephesus?
2. What do you think "the whole purpose of God" means?
3. What does Paul tell the church leaders to do (v.28)?
4. How can they follow Paul's example to do that?

5. Why do they need to do that?

FOR US

1. How do you think summary (or doctrinal statement!) of Paul's teaching might help them?
2. How could we use the doctrinal state at REC?

1. GOD

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator; Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory. (FIEC Doctrinal Basis)

GET THINKING

1. What different ideas do people around us have about who God is?

LOOKING AT THE BIBLE

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. (Eph. 1:3 NET)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. 2 The Word was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. (Jn. 1:1-3 NET)

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back for yourself part of the proceeds from the sale of the land? 4 Before it was sold, did it not belong to you? And when it was sold, was the money not at your disposal? How have you thought up this deed in your heart? You have not lied to people but to God!" (Acts 5:3-4 NET)

1. What do these verses teach us about the Trinity?

FOR US

2. How could you use them with, for example, a Muslim or a Jehovah's Witness who denies the Trinity?

LOOKING AT THE BIBLE

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water. 3 God said, "Let there be light." And there was light! (Gen. 1:1-3 NET)

1. Looking at Genesis 1:1-3 and John 1:1-3 how do we see the different persons in the Trinity acting in creation?

FOR US

1. Given the examples we've looked at (creation, revelation and salvation) how would you explain to someone about why the Trinity is important in Christianity?

DAILY READINGS

WHY A DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

DAY 1

Read

16 So the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:16-20 NET)

Reflect

At REC we want to be a disciple-making church, because that is what Jesus told us to do. Central to that task is "teaching them to obey everything I [Jesus] have commanded you." We need to get that right, otherwise we won't be making disciples of Jesus. A good, biblical, doctrinal statement is one that summarises the teaching of Jesus (which is ultimately the teaching of the Bible, see e.g. Luke 24:27, 44-49) clearly and faithfully. It helps us to check that what we're teaching people and how we're living that teaching out is faithful to Jesus and his message.

1. What important areas do you think would need to be covered to summarise Jesus' teaching faithfully?

2. What would happen to the church's mission if we got the message of Jesus wrong?

Pray

Pray we would be faithful to Jesus' mission by being clear about Jesus' teaching at REC.

DAY 2

Read

20 "I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony, 21 that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. (Jn. 17:20-21 NET)

9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God. The one who remains in this teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and do not give him any greeting, 11 because the person who gives him a greeting shares in his evil deeds. (2 Jn. 1:9-11 NET)

Reflect

Jesus prays for the church to be united. Sometimes people think that being clear about what we believe divides rather than unites, but notice who Jesus prays will be united: “those who believe in me through their [the apostles’] testimony.” In other words, he prays that those who are united in what they believe – the apostles’ testimony, which for us is in the Bible – won’t let things that don’t matter divide them.

As we see in the passage from 2 John, it is possible for people to claim to be Christian but “not remain in the teaching of Christ.” We shouldn’t be united with these people, because they do not believe and in fact if a person is united with them, that person “shares in his evil deeds.”

A good doctrinal statement helps us see the difference between a believer we should be united with and a false teacher we should avoid.

1. What might we divide over that we shouldn’t?
2. Can you think of examples of people we might be united with who we shouldn’t?

Pray

Pray that REC would be united in the message of Jesus and his apostles.

Pray that we would be united with other churches and believers who believe the message of Jesus and his apostles.

Pray we would not be united with false teachers and people who claim to believe in Jesus but don’t.

DAY 3

Read

6 and in front of the throne was something like a sea of glass, like crystal. In the middle of the throne and around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second creature like an ox, the third creature had a face like a man's, and the fourth creature looked like an eagle flying. 8 Each one of the four living creatures had six wings and was full of eyes all around and inside. They never rest day or night, saying: "Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God, the All-Powerful, Who was and who is, and who is still to come!" 9 And whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders throw themselves to the ground before the one who sits on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever, and they offer their crowns before his throne, saying: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, since you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!" (Rev. 4:6-11 NET)

Reflect

Although the language of Revelation can be confusing the point is fairly clear that when we come to what this passage shows us about God.

1. What do we learn about what God is like?
2. What response do we see to God in the passage and how does that teach us to respond to God?

Pray

Use the words of v.8 and v.11 to praise God.

DAY 4

Read

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will thwart the cleverness of the intelligent." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the expert in the Mosaic law? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made the wisdom of the world foolish? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom did not know God, God was pleased to save those who believe by the foolishness of preaching. 22 For Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks ask for wisdom, 23 but we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. 24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. 26 Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position. (1 Cor. 1:18-26 NET)

Reflect

People often think they are wise and often set great value of the wisdom of humans, but this passage from Paul (written into a context of wise Greek philosophy) undercuts that view.

1. How does the gospel compare to human wisdom?
2. How does God's wisdom compare with man's wisdom?

Pray

Give thanks for a wise God who given us a wise gospel beyond the wisdom of the world.

DAY 5

Read

The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. 10 In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 Jn. 4:8-10 NET)

Reflect

We often here talk about God's love and how God loves us. It helps to let the Bible define what that means, as these verse help us to do.

1. How would you describe God's love from these verses?
2. What difference does it make to know God loves like this? How should we respond?

Pray

Give thanks for God's love shown in the death of Jesus for our sins. Pray for a greater appreciation of God's love and a greater love for God in return.