

## Take It Home

### Degrees of Authority Exercise

Find three examples for each of the following degrees of authority:

- Direct statements of Scripture.
- Direct implications of Scripture.
- Probable implications of Scripture.
- Inductive conclusions from Scripture.

### Sermon and Bible Study Usage

Look to further enhance the integrity of sermons and Bible studies by increasingly checking Church literature and reputable word study sources, commentaries, books and articles.

**Handout**—includes the following sections:

- Approach to Doctrine
- Development of the Fundamental Beliefs – Church of God, a Worldwide Association
- Introduction to Doctrine

## APPROACH TO DOCTRINE

**T**he subject of doctrine is one of critical importance. Without an established doctrinal foundation, everything else we accomplish is of little value. We must ask ourselves, “If our doctrines are not correct, will anything else matter?” We must be diligent in preserving the truth. We must not succumb to pressure to compromise the Word of God. We must be willing to address difficult doctrinal questions in an open and honest manner. Our approach must be humble and collaborative, not arrogant and isolated.

We must begin with solid principles and proceed to the more difficult questions. We must confirm and reestablish the foundational beliefs that brought all of us together in the first place. In Ephesians 2:19-20 Paul states, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” Our foundation must be grounded in the Word of God, both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of our beliefs and practices. Peter confirms this principle in 2 Peter 3:1-2: “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”

As a Church, we must be well-grounded in the truth. Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:14-15, “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” The margin in the New King James Version gives “foundation” as an alternate translation for “ground.” The truth is a very special gift that has been given to us by God the Father. We must respect it and treat it with great care. The Church must be founded on the fundamental truths that God has revealed in His Word.

Our approach toward the study of doctrine will be of great importance. We must be respectful of God’s Word, and we must be diligent in our efforts. Time will be required to produce the scholarly papers that will be important in confirming our beliefs. We must be patient with the process, and we must be willing to participate. We must bear with one another and be patient as we fine-tune this process. Above all, we must seek the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit.

The following points summarize our approach to doctrine:

- The Holy Scriptures represent God’s written revelation to mankind. While other sources may be of value in supporting the biblical record, any contradiction of the Bible is against divine revelation.
- The Bible is to be read, viewed and interpreted as a whole. The Bible interprets itself. God’s purpose has been the same from the beginning. Doctrine is established upon the clear, consistent teaching throughout the Bible and not upon a few passages of Scripture.
- The Bible interprets its many symbols.

- The Bible does not contradict itself. Alleged contradictions can arise through misunderstandings of linguistic, cultural and historical details. Contradictions are not part of God's revelation.
- The Bible's account of the Kingdom of God, the Divine Realm and its description of the creation of the physical world and events in human history are to be viewed as true and accurate.
- The Bible was written to be applicable and meaningful to all generations of humanity (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We should diligently apply its laws and principles in our own environment, while being cognizant of the cultural and historical setting surrounding the text.
- The Bible was written for all peoples. Those called by God have been given understanding of His great plan. The understanding of the Bible is not altered because of the changing philosophical ideas of a generation.
- Wherever possible, the simple straightforward understanding of the text is preferred. Priority should be given to the understanding provided by Christ, the Apostolic Church and the original audience in the context of their day.
- The Bible reveals the plan of God created from the foundation of the earth. In the current church age, it involves a divine calling by God the Father. God is not trying to save the entire world in this age. Therefore, this is not the only day of salvation. The plan of salvation is revealed through the annual holy days.
- The Old Testament outlines many of the basic doctrines of the Church, including an understanding of what is needed under the New Covenant relationship.
- The Bible contains inspired prophecy, which is not subject to private interpretation.
- The apostle Paul does not reinterpret Christ. Paul's epistles should be interpreted in light of, or based on, Christ's teachings and not the reverse.
- Distinction must be made between the understanding relating to a doctrine and the administration of that doctrine.
- No book or portion of the Bible claims to present a complete systematic presentation of doctrine or theology. Doctrines are understood by examining all the relevant sections on the subject or doctrine at hand.