

## **A Church's Priority #1: Teaching Bible Doctrine (Acts 2:42a)**

*Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on February 17, 2013*

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I have a very important announcement and good news as we begin. This may have mixed responses, but I'm under orders to give this message from the King of heaven and earth. It's an announcement straight from His throne that comes with highest authority and it's my high accountability to deliver it accurately. The King enlisted me to be His herald, to gather the people like a town crier, and to tell you all, "you must hear this; this is the decree of the King for you!" Everyone in His domain must give attention to this edict. It's not like a State of the Union address that you can choose to ignore, this is what the Commander-in-Chief of the Universe has to say to His subjects, and it deserves and demands your undivided attention and unhesitating response.

*This is the word of the King of kings: "let this be known to you and give heed to my words ... listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him ... this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God ... nailed to a cross ... God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power ... know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:14, 21-24, 33)*

That's parts of the message of King Jesus delivered by His herald Peter, His apostle (authorized "sent one"), in Acts 2, and you can be turning there to that announcement of the King that we'll be looking at today. I introduce our study this way not to be clever but to make clear *preaching is heralding a message from an absolute ruler to those in His domain*. The Greek word for preach, *kerusso*, meant "to cry out loud," "to proclaim," "to declare," "to announce" ... "to call to ..." "to summon someone to something."<sup>1</sup> Preaching is not suggestions; it's a summons from the sovereign. It's not just sitting on a stool "sharing"; it's declaring for the King.

Peter is the authorized apostle or "sent one," and in Acts 2:14 Peter "*raised his voice and declared to them*" (i.e., a crowd of thousands on the day of Pentecost). In Acts 2:40 it says "*And with many other words he solemnly testified [a different word that is an intensified form of "to testify earnestly or repeatedly, or to charge"<sup>2</sup>] and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved..." [that word means "plead" or "urge" or "admonish" – all strong words God's Word requires]* In v. 38 Peter issues the command of the kingdom "*Repent and be baptized ...*" ...<sup>41</sup> *So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.*<sup>42</sup> *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

Verse 41 says they received the word in the sense of welcomed it or embraced it heartily, accepted it gratefully on the King's terms. They received the Word and responded to the Word in immediate obedience, and in v. 42 I want us to see their regular devotion to it. The first and foremost mark of the early church in v. 42 is devotion to 'doctrine,' or 'teaching' (depending on translation). As believers repented and were baptized and added to the church, God's Spirit moved them to love biblical teaching and to live biblical teaching, as Acts 2:42-47 lays it out. And God's Spirit moved Luke as he wrote the book of Acts to highlight early church priority #1

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'*The apostle's doctrine*' (NKJV) is simply Bible doctrine or *teaching* of OT/NT. There are 4 priorities this early church was committed to in v. 42 that I want us to spend some time on this week and in weeks ahead: doctrine/teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Today I want to draw our attention to what drew the devoted attention of the 1st church above and beyond everything else: doctrine/teaching

This is a new season in the life of our church in this new building. There is a new service time, there's some new families among us, and many of you are meeting people who are new to you who went to a different service than you. Newness and change can be a good thing, but something that must never change is the Word of God's centrality and having the place of supremacy in all we do and say, and I think it's a good time to renew this #1 church commitment

Bible teaching is not new here at GCBC, thankfully. Any teaching of doctrine that's new isn't true. Our doctrine is from the gospel's 'old, old story,' 'the old rugged cross,' and from the Old Testament. It's good to go "back to the basics" from time to time, foundational truths of the faith. It's not enough to affirm Scripture's inerrancy (it's without error), we must herald and proclaim the sufficiency of Scripture for all of life, and submit to biblical authority personally.

The context of Acts 2 is the day of Pentecost, when the promised Holy Spirit came, as Jesus said He would after He returned to the Father. Jesus promised "*I will build My church*" and here He fulfills that promise by the "*apostle's teaching*."

v. 21: "*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" How do we call on the name of the Lord so we can be in this church and receive the Spirit? That's in essence what they ask Peter in v. 37: "*...what shall we do?*"

Peter tells them in v. 38 they need to repent, and be baptized, a real repentance responding in obedience. We see it in v. 37 as hearts are cut by the teaching of the apostles (another way to say the gospel message). The Spirit convicts and converts when He regenerates a sinner so his changed heart repents and obeys in baptism, not that either of those are *works we do to be regenerated*; they're responses to the Spirit's *work in us*, changing us, making us alive in Christ.

What does it look like when the Spirit saves someone and places someone in Christ's church? They continue in the apostle's teaching as v. 42 says, in fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Today we'll look at the first and foremost mark of the Spirit-filled Christ-built church *And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine...*

**OUTLINE:**

- 1. What "the apostle's doctrine/teaching" was and is**
- 2. What application is to come from it**

King Jesus in Revelation is introduced as the One who "*was and is and is to come*" and that also summarizes His gospel: past, present, and future work. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever in the future, and so is the apostle's teaching of Christ for all His people for all time.

The One who "*was, is, and is to come*" inspired Luke to record these words about what the early church's doctrine *was and is*, and what application *is to come* from it in faithful churches.

## 1. What "the apostle's doctrine/teaching" was and is

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote a chapter on this verse decades ago called "Doctrine First," where he explained how the preeminence and priority of doctrine listed first in v. 42 is "the exact opposite of ... people in the world who dislike Christian doctrine ... nothing at all new about this ... But what is new today - and this is what is alarming and tragic - is that the opposition to Christian doctrine is not confined to the world, but is at the very center of the teaching of the church herself. The church is now speaking against Christian doctrine. She is saying that doctrine is not what is needed...[quotes a 'Christian' book *Not So Much a Creed, More a Way of Life*] ...the institution that has been most responsible for the lowering of the authority of the Bible has been the Christian church ... The Bible has been watered down ... The church has undermined confidence in the Bible ... Have you repented of your rejection of doctrine?"<sup>3</sup>

In the decades since Lloyd-Jones was alarmed at that trend against doctrine or dogma or creed in England, we've seen entertainment-driven churches in America that exchanged doctrine for drama, and preaching has been eclipsed by performances. In 21st century America, emergent churches have replaced doctrine with 'dialogue' and preaching the apostle's message of absolute truth is traded for a post-modern message of subjective squishiness. But even in solid Christian circles and churches, doctrine is a word with negative connotations and so is dogma (being very dogmatic is usually considered a bad thing).

Lloyd-Jones said decades ago in his day some were already saying: "We don't want doctrine. We don't want ... theology. All we want is something to help us to get along." But the answer to that is that nothing will help you to get along except [doctrine] ... But modern men and women do not like it. "No, no," they say, "not so much a doctrine, more a way of life." But you cannot have it! This is truth. This is God's message...And [in v. 42] that is what these people longed to hear more and more of. They knew they had new life but they said, "We need more of it. We're in the world still, and the world and the flesh and the devil are powerful, and we are weak. Tell us more of the teaching." They wanted to know what it means to be "in Christ" and "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). They wanted to know more about this blessed Spirit...They wanted to know about the world that is to come ... So "*They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine...*"<sup>4</sup>

Lloyd-Jones was writing ahead of his times in the 40s through 70s, but then I found this quote from 100 years earlier, J.C. Ryle, writing in the 1800s: 'Dislike of dogma is an epidemic which is just now doing great harm, and specifically among young people....It produces what I must venture to call...a "jelly-fish" Christianity in the land: that is, a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or power. A jelly-fish...is a pretty and graceful object when it floats in the sea, contracting and expanding like a little, delicate, transparent umbrella. Yet the same jelly-fish, when cast on the shore, is a mere helpless lump, without capacity for movement, self-defense, or self-preservation ... [like] much of the religion of this day, of which the leading principle is, "No dogma, no distinct tenets, no positive doctrine." We have hundreds of "jelly-fish" [preachers], who seem not to have a single bone in their body of divinity.'<sup>5</sup> ['body of divinity'=body of beliefs]

Instead of evangelical conviction and backbone, today there are evan-jellyfishes, spineless, but even weaker than jellyfish in the ocean, because they don't want to ever sting anybody. But it wasn't just a concerning trend in recent centuries, Luther seemed to be writing about our day back in the 1500s in *Bondage of the Will*, writing of a dislike of dogmatic assertions:

'Why, then, do you too assert, "I take no delight in assertions," and that you prefer this frame of mind to its opposite? ... it is not the mark of a Christian mind to take no delight in assertions; on the contrary, a man must delight in assertions or he will be no Christian ... Nothing is better known or more common among Christians than assertion. Take away assertions and you take away Christianity...What Christian would agree that assertions are to be despised? That would be nothing but a denial of all religion ...'<sup>6</sup>

But we could go back all the way to Bible times, where Paul told Timothy some would "*not endure sound doctrine.*" Pilate asked "*what is truth?*" Israel's religious leaders in NT times didn't like how Jesus made assertions, authoritative statements of truth, His absolute unqualified unmodified uncompromised truth: "*I Am the way, the truth, and the life. No one gets to the Father but through Me.*" "*You have heard it said ... but I say to you...*" Jesus does that several times in the Sermon on the Mount and at the end of that it says "*the people were astonished at his doctrine ... he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes* (Mt 7:28-29 KJV). The gospels say 5x His doctrine amazed them. In Luke 4:32 "*they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power.*"

In the gospels there's a contrast between the teaching of scribes and Pharisees (whose doctrines and instructions were man-made and externally based and therefore could never transform the heart), in contrast to Christ's doctrines that were made by God to change our hearts. Jesus said of Pharisees "*their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*" (Matt 15:8-9). In other words, they were teaching what man said as doctrine, as dogma, man's words as dogmatic truth. But Jesus in contrast spoke not on the authority of other men, and He taught not the doctrine of men, but the doctrine of God the Father.

John 7:16 (NKJV) "*My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.*"<sup>17</sup> *If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.*<sup>18</sup> *He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory ...*

There are men who seek their own glory and speak from their own authority but it's all a bunch of hot air and wind. Ephesians 4 says Christians are not to be "*carried about by every wind of doctrine ... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head...Christ*" (v.14-15). We need to speak the true doctrine of Christ in love and not be blown about by the doctrine of men. This is one of the dangers of legalism, or setting up rules and regulations that we measure righteousness by, as Colossians 2:22 says:

"...according to the commandments and doctrines of men?"<sup>23</sup> *These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*" [our rules can't, but Colossians exalts the supremacy of the doctrine of Christ to truly transform us]

So don't believe for a minute that Jesus is all about love and living life a certain way, but He wasn't into doctrine or dogma. Jesus was very dogmatic, He was bull-dogmatic! He was emphatic about the doctrine of His deity, the doctrine of salvation in Him alone. So as we love and live for Him, it must flow from right doctrine of Christ that has transformed us from the inside out because of gospel truth.

Rom 6:17 (NKJV) *...though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed **from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*** 2 John 9 says he who “*does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son*” (NKJV – the saved abide in Christ’s doctrine)

So you can't say, "we're not into doctrine, we're just into Jesus." Jesus said "if you don't receive what I say, you don't receive Me." "But no, I'm committed to Jesus, I just don't want to commit *to a church.*" "I'm a part of Christ, I'm joined with Him, but I don't want to be a part *of you people in the sense of joining Christ's church.*" Many say "I love Jesus, but a church? Not so much. No offense."

I think Jesus *does take offense with those who say* they love Him but don't love His bride who He died for and loves supremely. You can't pull that one with me about Jaime, and Christ loves His bride more. You can't say I want Jesus the head of the church, but not the church, or a head without a body like John the Baptist's on a plate. We can't separate Christ from His church or His doctrine, and you couldn't separate His church from His doctrine either in Acts 2:42.

THEY WERE - imperfect active indicative, i.e., continual pattern

CONTINUALLY DEVOTING - the Greek verb in v. 42 has the idea of persisting at something, staying with something, or loyalty to someone. With an object, like here, it means “to occupy oneself diligently with something,” “to pay persistent attention to”...“to hold fast to something”...“continually to be in” (*TDNT*, 3:618).

One Greek dictionary says the ideas include 'endure in ... decisive or unflinching perseverance ...tenaciousness... abiding...persistently eagerly attend to' (*EDNT*, 3:172). Another source says this word for "devoting to" in v. 42 meant 'remaining faithfully attached to ... of applying oneself exclusively to a certain thing, devoting oneself to it tirelessly...[it was used for a daughter] "... *diligent* in her studies" ... It is always a matter of persevering, not letting up, as is seen in the technical use of the verb in the legal vocabulary ... finally the verb refers to the exertion of great efforts, especially in military language:...“soldiers, by *persevering* ... [same Grk word] dislodged four stone blocks” (Josephus)' -*TLNT*, 3:191-193.

When the apostles were giving teaching or instruction (other words for doctrine) this is the word for the commitment of the 1st church. Church priority #1 was preaching or teaching of Bible doctrine. As we read this verse and the rest of the chapter, you don't get the idea these Christians would complain if Peter urged them to come back in the evening for more teaching ("Peter, that's our family time"). It wasn't enough for them to hear the apostle's teaching Sunday AM.

Look at v. 46: *Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple ...* [same word *continuing* from v. 42, continual steadfast devotion]

Look at chapter 4, as they're teaching this big group in the house of God: *As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, <sup>2</sup> being greatly disturbed because they [apostles] were **teaching** the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*

The apostle's teaching in Acts always centers on the resurrected Christ, His gospel. In Acts chapter 5, verse 12, it says the apostles were teaching in the temple in the portico, until finally Acts **5:17** *But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. <sup>18</sup> They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. <sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, <sup>20</sup> "Go, stand and **speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.**" <sup>21</sup> Upon hearing this, they **entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach ...** <sup>25</sup> But someone came and reported to them [the temple guard and Sadducees], "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and **teaching** the people!" ... <sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they [apostles] **kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.***

That was the doctrine of the apostles they continually steadfastly were devoted to, and kept continually or steadfastly in, Jesus the Christ as Lord, and therefore everything He said must be obeyed. This is what the Lord told His disciples days before the beginning of the book of Acts: "go ... make disciples ... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19 commission).

In Acts 6, the apostles appoint 7 other leaders to help them fulfill this, 7 spirit-filled servants (later called "deacons," which means a recognized servant-leader). The apostles explain in Acts 6:4 "we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." It's the same word from Acts 2:42 for the church's *devotion to teaching*

As Paul becomes one of the apostles, this is the same pattern in his ministry. It says in Acts 11:26 for an entire year they met with the church in Antioch that was also devoted to the apostle's teaching, that's where they were first called Christians. Acts **15:35** says "Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, **teaching** and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord."

**18:5** *But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began **devoting himself completely to the word ...***

The apostle Paul comes to Ephesus in the same devotion: **19:9** *But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, **reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.** <sup>10</sup> **This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.***

**20:20** ... *I did not shrink from **declaring to you** anything that was profitable, and **teaching you** publicly and from house to house,<sup>21</sup> **solemnly testifying** to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ...<sup>22</sup> “For I did not shrink from **declaring to you the whole purpose of God** ...<sup>31</sup> “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that **night and day** for a period of three years I did not cease to **admonish each one** with tears.<sup>32</sup> “And now I commend you to God and to **the word of His grace** ...*

That's the doctrine or teaching of the apostles that we could sum up as gospel and God's full counsel. The gospel's word of His grace is not just for unbelievers, it's to build up believers in gospel doctrine.

That's what "the apostle's doctrine/teaching" was and is (#1), now:

## **#2. What application is to come from this**

Acts 2:42a is not just for that 1 church's devotion to Bible teaching. 1 Timothy 4:13 commands ‘*devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching*’ (NIV, NKJV ‘doctrine’ and v. 16 ‘*take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue...*’). You need to devote yourselves continually as well. Every Sunday AM/PM, the GCBC Elders commit to public reading of Scripture (as we began today's service with), and preaching and teaching. It's our desire as Elders here to see more of you devoting yourselves to the preaching of God's Word on Sunday evenings when we have a public reading of Scripture and preaching or teaching. One way to obey and apply that command, for those who can, is to come back.

### **Application #1: Prioritize preaching**

‘*Devote yourself to preaching*’ God’s Word commands in 1 Tim 4, like the Acts 2 church did. Some of you only come for preaching 2 or 3x a month, and there’s a lot more preaching and teaching in this building up-stairs and downstairs, morning and evening, and you need to be here to hear it more to grow. People structure their families and schedules around what they consider to be priorities, and Scripture makes clear that preaching and teaching is to be a high priority.

How can we help communicate the priority of preaching to our children? One blog suggests:

1. **Focus on this moment throughout the week:** Talk about Sunday morning worship all week long. Help your children to see that each week begins with this privilege ([Acts 20:7](#); [Hebrews 10:24-25](#)).
2. **Model excitement about the Lord’s Day:** Children learn a great deal by watching their parents. If Mom and Dad reluctantly go to church, then the children will reluctantly go to church. If Mom and Dad are critical of the preacher, sermon, etc. then the children will most likely be critical. Wake up early on Sunday morning and prepare for worship. Let the children see your joy and excitement.
3. **Implement family worship at home:** A family that worships together at home will find it much easier to worship together in corporate worship. A child will find it natural to hear the Word of God, to read the Word of God, to sing the hymns, etc. This will also help our children to learn to sit still, to understand the importance of worship, to focus during prayer, etc.
4. **Read the passage during the week:** Most sermon series are an exposition of one book of the Bible. This means that you know what you are going to hear read and preached in the week’s service—the next passage. Read it throughout the week and converse about it around the dinner table or during family worship. The children will then be familiar with the text that the pastor is preaching on. With this knowledge, give them some things to listen for in the sermon.
5. **Start early:** Many believe that it is harder to introduce a five year old to corporate worship than a twelve year old, but this is not true. A five year old is in the formative years of training. They are not yet “set in their ways.” A few months of struggling with a four or five year old teaching them how to sit in corporate worship yields benefits for the rest of their lives.
6. **Use Moments in the Service:** Use transitional moments in the service to whisper in your child’s ear how much you loved a certain verse in a hymn, how you need to remember to pray for the sick person mentioned, or how you were convicted by that application. It keeps them engaged and allows them to see you participating intently in the service.

7. **Use the Obvious Helps:** We often forget to use the helps that are already available to us. For example: have an older child find the Bible passage or guide your finger over the text as it is read for a younger child. Use the bulletin and show your children where the service is at. Have them read the confession as you point along with each word.
8. **Sit near the Front:** Children are easily distracted, so sit near the front where there are less distractions.
9. **Create an atmosphere in your row:** Encourage your children to pay attention, to stand when everyone stands, to sing when they are to sing, to bow their heads in prayer when the congregation is to pray, etc.
10. **Enlist the Support of Other Members:** Ask another member to lend a helping hand by sitting with your family. Surround yourself with other families that you have enlisted to provide you encouragement and not to fuss if your child is a little restless.
11. **Stop Worrying:** Many parents are concerned about what other parents or members of the congregation think of their parenting skills or how annoyed someone else is with their child's fidgeting during the service. DON'T! Commit as a congregation to welcome children into your services. This means that not only do our children have to adjust, but so do the adults. *In reality, it is adults who have to adjust the most!* Let's just learn to have a little more tolerance on this front. If a baby is a little fussy, papers are rustling, or a few things are dropping on the floor it is o.k. As congregations, we need to willingly and joyfully join in this great privilege of welcoming our covenant children into corporate worship. And that takes some minor adjusting on our part.
12. **Affirm Your Children:** When you leave the service and are on the way home, affirm your children. Ask them questions about the service and relay how the Lord blessed you. Encourage your children if they were well-behaved and let them know how wonderful it was to worship alongside of them.
13. **Be Consistent:** It will take time for your children to learn how to sit still, sing the hymns, etc. Be consistent in your expectations and desires for them during the service.
14. **Do Not be Overzealous:** *Be patient with your children and shower them with grace.* It takes children time to adjust and different children adjust or accept on different time tables. Your child may come into the service and sit attentively and quietly within a few weeks or you may have to help your child with this for months or even years (as has been our case!). Be patient! Love them and do not compare them to other children. God has blessed you with this little bundle of joy!

We'll never grow like the Acts 2 church if we're not in Acts 2:42a. Am I saying those who '*continue in the apostle's teaching*' Sunday evenings are super spiritual and better than others who only come for morning service? No, but I think the reason to come (and I trust a reason some of you come) is you know you're not super spiritual and sense your need for preaching. You know you're not better, but you want to know Scripture better. On the flip side, are you so super spiritual you don't need it?

In this new house of God, let's prioritize preaching for the good of our soul. Every time the double doors in the back open, the first thing you see is the pulpit where you can count on the Word being opened and to hear the apostle's teaching. Those doors when they come together have the outline of the cross in the center. The outer handles are spikes like rugged Roman nails so we never forget the 'old rugged cross.' Through the cross we enter the house of God, and as you do you see another cross on the front of this pulpit that symbolizes the centrality of the gospel that I pray will also be the focus as God's full counsel is preached here, not just on Sunday mornings, but Sunday evenings by other godly men devoted to the apostle's teachings, and I urge you to be devoted if/as you are able.

Not everyone is practically or providentially able to be here every time, but try not to schedule other things for your family Sundays that keep you from devoting to apostle's teaching (for some it's a family "TV time" or whatever), but when 1 Tim. 4:13 commands to be devoted to these things, and we're told not to be forsaking the assemblies in God's house as is the habit of some, we need to re-evaluate and re-prioritize by biblical priorities, not based on our habits or patterns but based on the NT pattern. I can't shrink back from declaring to you what's profitable, as Paul say in v. 20, and it is profitable for you to hear more of the apostle's preaching. Paul says in v. 32 '*the word of His grace...is able to build you up.*' You say 'are you laying down a law on us?' No, I want *the gospel to be in you, the word of grace that builds up.* That's why to prioritize it.



### **Application #2: Prioritize teaching**

1 Tim 4:13 says ‘*Devote yourself to preaching and to teaching...*’ (or in the NKJV ‘*to exhortation and to doctrine*’). If I can give you fathers some exhortation for a moment, most all of you can benefit from the study on doctrine that was taught yesterday at our men’s study and resources for teaching your kids Bible doctrine. I counted 6 or 7 GCBC dads there with young children at home. I’m thankful for some of the younger guys who attend who don’t have kids yet, and the older guys (every week various ones say they wish they had a study like this when they were my age), but there are about 30 of you dads with young kids who weren’t there and need to be. Am I saying every father should be in the family shepherd study? Yes!

Future fathers, too, and I’m thankful for the wisdom of grandpas in the group, and our next study in 2 weeks is crucial (family worship or devotions, leading, shepherding your wife better spiritually). If your wife thinks you can’t benefit from investment of other men in those areas, great, have her tell me, and I want to learn from you! If you ask my wife, I need that (and she says you guys need it, too)!!

That doesn’t just tie into “teaching” in Acts 2:42, but also the next dedication in Acts 2:42 “fellowship,” which I want to talk about next week more. If you can’t be there, keep up with the reading and fellowship (share spiritually)—audio online, handouts at lobby table. If/when you can’t be there, keep up the iron-sharpening fellowship.

There are other ways to devote yourself to teaching right before the service: Sunday School for men and women of all ages and stages of life. The handout from yesterday’s study goes through a history of doctrinal instruction to kids in addition to dad’s and preaching, by what some critics call “age-segregated ministry to children,” but I trace through from Bible times, church history, and Reformation history, the pattern of classes to teach children doctrine (like in SS)

Right now our high-schoolers are in a doctrines of grace SS class, 3 adult “elective” classes (a women’s study, Dean teaching Job, Jerry teaching John’s gospel of John), and Craig is teaching an OT survey (big picture of doctrines and themes). Each summer Lord-willing our plan is to start another Fundamentals of the Faith class on an academic year (semester) track, covering key doctrines till year-end, then each spring to summer; doctrines of grace (8 weeks) doctrine of church (8 weeks), doctrine of sanctification (8 weeks). Sunday School is another way to be devoted to teaching (if it gets full, we’ll have a class in other bldg).

We devote to doctrine (systematic teaching in addition to verse-by-verse teaching) like Paul in Acts 20, *to declare God’s full counsel*. We teach from both OT and NT, because Paul said in 2 Tim 3:16 “*All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for doctrine...*”

### **Application #3: Pray for increased appetite and affection for it**

I can try and talk you into doing what you don’t want to do, but I’d rather see God change your heart and hunger to want more Bible. 1 Peter 2:2-3 (ESV) says of the milk of the Word: “*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*”

We need to grow our appetite for the Word so by it we may grow. We need to hunger and thirst for the Bible like a baby does for the bottle. If we've tasted and seen the Lord is good, we'll desire more. But if I don't see it, how, you say? Pray Psalm 119:18 "*Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from your Law.*" Plead with God to open your eyes to see and savor the wonder in here, so it's not just a duty, but a delight (read 119:18 and verses after it).

If wonderful things are in God's law how much more in the gospel! If reading and praying Ps 119 doesn't stir your soul, study the gospel. That was last week's message from Psalm 103: *Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who forgives all your sins ...* We need to keep telling our soul "the old, old story of Jesus and His love" in the gospel and "love to tell the story." That hymn we sang earlier helps us think of the benefits of repeating the gospel:

I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat,  
What seems each time I tell it more wonderfully sweet ...  
I love to tell the story, for those who know it best  
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest

Mature believers who know the gospel story best love to tell it and to repeat it in their souls because it's pleasant to repeat. Each time we hear it in different ways it's more wonderfully sweet. Hymn writers of past centuries understood the gospel stirs our souls like nothing else, as the other hymn we sang says believers need to keep clinging to the old rugged cross and always cherish the gospel

I love that old cross where the dearest and best ... was slain ...  
The old rugged cross, so despised by the world, has a wondrous attraction for me  
... that old rugged cross, stained with blood ... a wondrous beauty I see

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<sup>1</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:697-98.

<sup>2</sup> *Complete Word Study Dictionary*, #1263.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd-Jones, p. 118, 131.

<sup>4</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Authentic Christianity*, p. 109, 114.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in J. I. Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J. C. Ryle* [Crossway Books, 2002], 72.

<sup>6</sup> *Luther's Works*, Vol. 33, p. 19-21.