
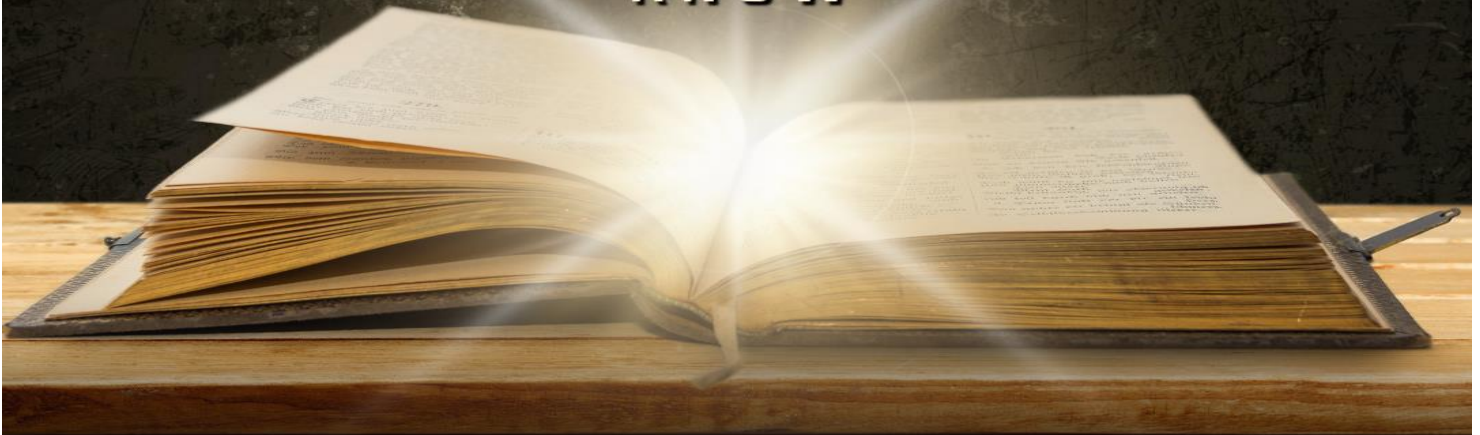


BASIC BIBLE DOCTRINE



WHAT EVERY LEADER, TEACHER,
PARENT, AND DISCIPLE SHOULD
KNOW



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I. GOD

Everything has a beginning, except God.

Everything has been created *by* God, *for* God, and *in* God. The Apostle Paul makes the point in his address on Mars Hill: “God . . . made the world and everything in it . . . And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth . . . for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:24-28).

1. God is a Spirit

One of the most common errors in religion is to imagine that God has a certain shape and material substance. But the Scriptures declare that God is a Spirit. By definition, we know that a spirit does not have a physical body. On occasion, God may have assumed certain shapes or spoken of Himself as having certain physical characteristics, but that was only for the purpose of relating to His creatures.

References: John 4:24; Luke 24:39

2. God is a Trinity

The Bible is clear that there is only one God. Yet it is equally clear that this one God exists in three Persons. It must be declared very clearly that we do not believe in three Gods. But the Bible also reveals that there are three distinct Persons who are this one God. The three are so unified in mind and purpose that they may be referred to as One.

The three Persons who exist eternally in divine fellowship as one God are revealed to human beings as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

References: Deuteronomy 6:4; Luke 3:22

3. God is a moral Being

Certain attributes of God's character become evident in His relationship with people. Again, these are defined in human terms to help our understanding cope with the mystery surrounding His nature.

A. God is Holy. The holiness of God refers to His absolute moral purity. It is impossible for God to sin. Furthermore, He cannot tolerate sin.

References: Leviticus 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:15-16

B. God is Love. All love has its source in God. Before anything was created, the members of the Trinity exercised love for one another. Creation is an expression of love in that Father, Son, and Spirit co-operatively brought into being creatures upon which They could lavish Their affection.

References: John 17:23; 1 John 3:1

C. God is Faithful. God is completely trustworthy. He always keeps His promises.

References: Numbers 23:19; 1 Corinthians 1:9

4. **God is not limited**

A. By time. God has no beginning or end. God is.

References: Exodus 15:18; Hebrews 11:6

B. By space. God is present everywhere at the same time.

References: Acts 7:48-49; Ephesians 1:23

C. In knowledge. God doesn't learn anything. He already knows the past, present, and future.

References: Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20

D. In power. God is almighty. He can do anything except act in a manner which would be contrary to His own character and nature.

References: Genesis 18:14; Matthew 19:26

II. THE BIBLE

God has chosen to reveal Himself to His creatures in several ways. He may be seen in nature where He displays His ability to design and His appreciation for beauty. History shows His providential hand guiding the affairs of people. Human conscience bears the imprint of His laws. Yet God communicates most specifically in the written Scriptures.

1. The Inspired Scriptures

God moved men to record the Truth about Himself, His acts, and His will for human beings. The Holy Spirit superintended this process so that each writer's individual style and personality was maintained while the infallible Word of God was recorded.

References: Exodus 24:3; 2 Peter 1:21

2. The Authoritative Scriptures

Since the Bible is the record of God's very nature and His purpose for people, we regard it as the only authoritative revelation. It is the faith "once and for all" delivered to the saints. Application of Scripture is possible in every generation, but there is nothing to add to its revealed content of the faith once for all delivered.

References: 2 Timothy 3:15-16; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18

III. Man

Before God completed His creative work, He made the highest and most complex of all living creatures on earth – a human being. This creature, so mysterious and yet so common, is capable of bringing great pleasure or great disappointment to the Maker.

1. People are made by God

The origin of human beings is a topic which has received much attention throughout the ages. Modern science has speculated that people simply evolved from lower forms of life. But God's Word is clear: Adam was created by God.

A. Adam was formed out of existing elements. God spoke the worlds into being, but He shaped Adam out of the dust of the ground.

References: Genesis 2:7: Isaiah 43:7

B. Adam was infused with a life principle. After God shaped the clay into the form of man, He breathed in life. A living person possesses this unique quality of life which allows interaction with other physical creatures and spiritual relationship with God.

References: Job 33:4: John 6:63

2. People are made male and female

The Bible indicates that “God created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created” (Genesis 5:2).

A. God made them male and female for companionship. God was not willing to stop creating after he made the male. He said that since it was not good for man to be alone, He would “make him a helper comparable to him” (2:18b). God places emphasis on the value of human relationships. He Himself existed eternally in a relationship among the Persons of the Trinity. His image is seen most clearly when people live in loving community. Hence, part of the image of God in mankind is reflected in the complementarity of maleness and femaleness.

References: Genesis 2:18-22

B. He made them male and female for procreation. God personally made the first male and female. He then declared that they should “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). The Bible reveals the divine pattern of male/female heterosexual marriage in faithful, monogamous union for life.

References: Genesis 4:1-2

C. He made them male and female to rule over the rest of creation. God assigned the task of ruling to the creatures made in His own image. The first pair of humans exercised God’s authority on earth.

References: Genesis 1:28: Genesis 2:19

3. People are created like their Maker

The Bible states that every creature was made after its own kind – except human beings. People were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:25-26). They have a closer relationship with their God than any other creature.

A. People are able to think. While many animals may by instinct or training react to certain situations, only people are able to store and organize data in such a way that they can intelligently reason.

References: Isaiah 1:18; Mark 12:28

B. People are able to communicate. Mankind has devised systems of sound and symbols for communicating. This ability to speak meaningful words and write messages distinguishes people as unique creatures. Because of this special talent, we can exchange ideas with other humans and with God.

References: Job 42:1-7; John 11:42

C. People are able to choose. After considering all possible options, people are able to choose a course of action by the exercise of the will. This power of choice means that humans must accept responsibility for their decisions.

References: Joshua 24:15; Luke 15:18

D. People are able to love. Love starts with God. The Apostle John states in his first epistle: “We love Him because He first loved us” (4:19). This ability to receive and give love is perhaps one of the clearest reflections of God’s nature in man.

References: 1 Samuel 18:1; 1 John 4:7

4. People have sinned against God

Although Adam and Eve were created in God’s image and were therefore good, they did have the ability to make choices. Unfortunately, they freely made a bad choice – they sinned.

One of the limitations God placed upon them related to a forbidden fruit. The first temptation was really a test of obedience – would they obey their God or would they try

to become gods by making their own rules about right and wrong?

A. God asked for obedience. Adam and Eve had all of God's creation at their disposal and for their benefit, except for the forbidden fruit. God gave explicit directions and expected obedience.

Reference: Genesis 3:2-3

B. Satan tempted. One of God's chief angelic creatures, Satan, grew dissatisfied with his role in God's plan for him. His attempt to dethrone God resulted in his expulsion from the heavenly place. Seeing an opportunity to thwart God's plan for the human creatures which had been placed in this new world, Satan tempted Eve to disobey God. All sin may be defined as the decision to replace God's laws with one's own – in effect, to act like a god.

References: Isaiah 14:12-14; 2 Peter 2:4

C. The consequences of sin. The consequences of sin are many and far-reaching. The fact that we have doors with locks and laws that must be enforced by police, points out that sin is a universal malady. The Scriptures clearly indicate "there is not a just person on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). When Adam and Eve wilfully disobeyed God, choosing instead to believe Satan's lie, they discovered that sin carried a steep price tag.

References: Psalm 14:1-4; Romans 3:23

(a) Spiritual alienation. Sin cuts us off from God. Before the fall, Adam enjoyed fellowship with God. He and his wife, Eve, immediately sensed that relationship change following their disobedience. Instead of seeking out God, they tried to hide from Him. Their sin established a barrier between all mankind and God.

References: Isaiah 59:1-2; 1 Timothy 6:15-16

(b) Physical curse. Some of the results of Adam's disobedience were immediate. Eve was subjected to physical pain in childbirth. The sorrow associated with bearing children also refers to the anxiety of raising sons and daughters in an evil and disease-ridden world. For Adam's part, the ground was cursed. Instead of yielding food freely, the soil would require toil, sweat, and frustration before it would be productive.

The foremost physical consequence, of course, was death itself. The warning of God, “. . . for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die,” proved true and mortality was decreed.

References: Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 5:12

(c) Personal bondage. Outwardly, sin separates us from God. Inwardly, it enslaves us. Although the tell-tale signs of sin appear in outward acts such as murder, adultery, dishonesty, and burglary, these acts are merely symptoms of the moral disease that has attached itself to the very nature of human beings. Jesus referred to the heart as the source of people’s evil deeds.

References: Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23

(d) Social conflict. Soon after Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden, sin claimed its next victim. Jealous over Abel’s more acceptable offering, Cain murdered his brother. With that action, sin gained control over yet another domain of man – his social relationships. As a result, we are plagued by a great variety of social disorders such as crime, domestic conflict, and war.

References: Exodus 20:12-17; Matthew 22:37-40

IV. Jesus Christ

God’s response to the dilemma of human sin was to initiate a plan of salvation. In the Old Testament, a sinner was required by God to offer a blood sacrifice to atone for his sins. The principle was that since the life is in the blood, and since the wages of sin is death, God would accept the life of an animal as a substitute for the life of a sinner.

The use of animals as sacrifices was only a temporary plan. Ultimately, God sent His Son into the world to be the One Sacrifice for all mankind. Jesus gave His life so that all may escape judgment.

1. His Birth

Jesus Christ is a member of the eternal Trinity. He has always existed as God, but He had a beginning as a human person. To qualify as the Saviour of humanity, He had to be born as a man. The theological term for this event is “the incarnation.”

A. Born of a virgin. Mary was selected to be the mother of Jesus. No human male was involved in His conception. The Holy Spirit superintended the process of God becoming a man through human birth.

References: Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:35

B. Born without sin. Since the Holy Spirit was involved in His birth, Jesus did not inherit the sinful nature that is passed on to children born of natural parents. Mary, of course, would have had a sinful nature. Yet the creative work of the Holy Spirit ensured that Jesus was born as a sinless child.

References: Hebrews 4:15: 1 John 3:5

2. His Ministry

After spending most of His life taking care of His mother and brothers and sisters in Nazareth, Jesus began His public ministry around the age of 30. In the space of three years He laid the principles for a new kingdom and trained a small group of people to introduce those truths to the whole world. Although He helped multitudes by performing miracles and showing His compassion for people in many ways, He met with great opposition from the religious and political leaders. Finally, as the Scriptures prophesied, He was crucified.

References: Isaiah 61:1-2: Matthew 28:19-20

3. His Death

To sceptics, the death of Jesus on the cross appears to be a tragedy. In fact, it was the most significant event for good in the history of mankind. Jesus offered Himself as the substitute for all sinners. Any person who is willing to identify with Jesus, acknowledging Him as Saviour and Lord, escapes the condemnation of death and receives the gift of eternal life.

References: John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:19

4. His Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus is more than a happy ending to a tragic story. It is evidence that God has power to overcome the results of sin. Jesus died in payment for our sin, but the power of God gave Him resurrection life. The Resurrected Christ is the single point in creation of absolute victory over sin, Satan, and death. His victory over death is the guarantee of resurrection for all those who accept Christ as Saviour and the hope for the purifying renewal of the whole earth.

References: Romans 8:11,21; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

5. His Ascension into Heaven

After spending a short period of time with His disciples after the resurrection, Jesus ascended from the earth and returned to His Father in heaven. It is very important to remember that Jesus ascended into heaven as “the man, Christ Jesus”(1 Timothy 2:5). That is, He ascended in a risen body, like the one we will one day possess. Before leaving, He instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for an empowering experience with the Holy Spirit.

Immediately after His ascension, an angel announced that Jesus would someday return to the earth in the same glorious human form in which He departed.

References: Mark 16:19; Acts 1:8-11

V. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Third Person of the Godhead. The designation “Third” does not indicate that He is less important. All members of the Trinity are eternal and equal.

The unique role of the Holy Spirit is to act as the agent who connects us with the purity and power of the Father and the Son. He was involved in the creation of the physical universe and He continues to be very active in the affairs of people.

He is probably the least understood member of the Trinity. This may be the case because the symbols which represent Him (such as wind, fire, water, and oil) are rather

impersonal. We easily visualize the Father and the Son as persons, but the operations of the Holy Spirit are more often considered than His personality.

1. Creative Works

The first chapter of Genesis describes the chaotic condition of the elements of the world upon which the Spirit of God moved. Order was fashioned out of disorder by the Spirit. The Spirit was involved also in the creation of man.

References: Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4

2. Inspiration

The Holy Spirit is the supernatural inspiring agent of the Bible. He moved upon the hearts of human writers and chose from their vocabulary the exact words that God wanted to convey His message.

References: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21

3. The Holy Spirit and Jesus

The Spirit superintended the whole process of the incarnation. He performed the miracle in the womb of Mary which resulted in the holy child being born into the world.

The Bible records quite specifically that at the time Jesus was baptized, the Spirit came upon Him in a special manner. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, proceeded to exercise His dynamic ministry. Jesus not only lived in the power of the Spirit, He died in the Spirit and was raised from the dead in the Spirit.

The Spirit's passion is to conform people to the likeness of the crucified and resurrected Christ.

References: Luke 4:18; Hebrews 9:14; Romans 8:11,26-29

4. The New Birth

The Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's work to every person who will respond. He

convicts a person of his sin and shows him there is a Saviour. The miracle that He performs in the life of every person who will exercise faith in Jesus is referred to as being “born again.”

References: John 3:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13

5. The Baptism and Fruit of the Spirit

The Spirit works in the life of the believer helping him to become more like Jesus. His infilling fans the heart toward mission to all the nations of the earth. The fruits of the Spirit are really the characteristics of Jesus that are growing in the life of the Christian. It is the presence of the Spirit that allows the believer to be gentle, loving, kind, patient – in short, like Jesus.

References: John 15:1-5; Galatians 5:22,23; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:4

6. The Gifts of the Spirit

The Spirit gives special assistance to enable Christians to carry out the great commission. Generally, it may be said that the gifts which the Spirit gives are not intended for the personal use of the recipient, but rather for the good of the fellow members of the church and the lost world.

We examine and judge all contemporary manifestations of the Spirit by the final revelation of God’s Word, the Bible. While not excluding any New Testament ministration of the Holy Spirit among God’s people, we are constantly careful to obey the Apostle Paul’s caution not to “go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6).

It is always important to remember that while some of the gifts (such as tongues, prophecy, and healings) are very dramatic, the lives of the people who exercise the gifts should also exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in order for the gifts to be effective (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

References: Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

VI. The Church

The Holy Spirit brings together individual Christians to form a community, or family,

known as the Church. During His earthly ministry, Jesus prepared His followers to make His purposes known to all mankind. The Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is presently engaged in that task. This is why the Church is called the “body of Christ.” Jesus is not physically present in this world right now. But He is present in and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church (1 John 3:24). The church is His means of getting things done in this world.

1. The Foundation of the Church

The foundation of the Church is Jesus Himself. He brought the message and called the Apostles. Although the foundation was laid during Jesus’ ministry, the Church really found its fullest expression when the Holy Spirit began to apply the benefits of Jesus’ death on the cross.

After the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost, there was a phenomenal spread of Christianity. The Church grew as people responded to the preaching of the gospel.

References: Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19-22

2. The Membership of the Church

In the Scriptures, the Church is referred to in a couple of distinct ways: a universal sense and a local sense.

A. The universal church. Membership here consists of all persons (past, present, and future) who accept the gospel and exercise faith in Christ as Saviour.

References: Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:13

B. The local church. Membership here consists of a group of professing believers in a specific locality. In the Biblical sense, the local church would be the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the Church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17), or the Church of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1). In our day we refer to the local church by name – for example, Cedarview Community Church.

3. The Mission of the Church

The Church’s function is threefold, to glorify God, minister to the body of Christ, and

evangelize the world. Its mission, then, is directed upward, inward, and outward.

A. Upward mission. The primary purpose, indeed the highest calling of man, is to glorify God. The Church assembles to glorify God collectively, as well as prepare its members to glorify God individually in the world.

References: Romans 15:5-6; Ephesians 3:21

(a) Worship, praise, and prayer. The church comes together to worship God (affirming His “worth-ship”), praise Him (thankfulness for His blessings), and pray that His will be accomplished.

References: Psalm 50:23; Matthew 6:9-13

(b) Godliness. The greatest glory God receives is through believers who live in obedience to His Word.

References: 1 Samuel 15:22; John 15:8

B. Inward mission. Another function of the Church is to minister to the members so that they will mature in the faith and grow in ministry as effective ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

References: Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:9-10

(a) Edification. Each member is encouraged to find a place of ministry for the purpose of building up the Church.

References: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 14:26

(b) Education. The Church provides a forum for teaching members Christian doctrine and helping them develop the graces of the Christian life.

The public church service should provide the impetus for individual members to build themselves up through personal devotions and Bible study, all resulting in service to this lost world.

References: 1 Corinthians 12:28; Colossians 2:6-7

(c) Fellowship. Since man is a social being, he enjoys being with others of like faith and interests. The early believers established a special time when they would gather to encourage one another.

References: Acts 2:42: 20:7: Hebrews 10:24.25

C. Outward mission. God has commissioned the Church to give the whole world an opportunity to hear the gospel and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour, and spread His love to this dying world.

References: Matthew 28: 19.20: Romans 10:14.15

4. The Ordinances of the Church

An ordinance is a ceremony which expresses a saving truth of the Christian faith. In the New Testament we find only two divinely ordained sacraments, – Water Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

A. Water baptism. Baptism is the pledge of entrance into the Christian Church. It symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ in death to sin and resurrection to new life. Water baptism in itself has no saving power. The recipient must be a believer who has repented from his sins and exercised a genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

The witness of the New Testament and the early Church indicate that the recipient should be totally immersed "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

References: Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4

B. The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus before His death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father. Because Jesus has physically left this earth, and is now present in an unseen way through the Holy Spirit, He calls us to regularly and visibly express our faith in Him.

Bread and wine are visible symbols of Christ's body which was broken for us and His blood which was shed for us. By Christ's appointment, we do not merely look at these emblems. We eat and drink them. This shows the need for a personal experience of faith. We receive the Saviour as our one and only source of forgiveness and eternal life.

Christ has not ordained that we should separately partake of His Supper. Faith cannot be just a private matter. When we receive the bread and wine in the presence of other members of the church, we together proclaim our faith in His atoning death – until that Day when He returns to this earth.

References: Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

VII. Future Events

The Church plays a major role in God's plan for the world during the last days. Just as Genesis describes the beginning of all things, the book of Revelation describes the end.

Between the Ascension and Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the Church serves as Christ's representatives seeking to reconcile lost humanity back to a loving God. This period will end and God's judgment will be finalized.

1. The Second Coming of Christ

Immediately following Jesus ascension, an angel appeared to His anxious followers assuring them that "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

The Lord's promised return is both the hope of the Church and the incentive individual believers contemplate to live holy lives in this impure world.

References: Matthew 24:44, Titus 2:11-13

Here are some of the main events surrounding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ:

- a) There will be a time of intense trial on the earth. The Scriptures call this period "the tribulation." Immediately before the wrath of God is poured out on the earth, Christians who have died will be physically raised from their graves. This will include both those who died in faith before Jesus died on the cross and those who have died in faith since. Those who are alive at this time will be transformed and caught up with the resurrected saints.
- b) Jesus will visibly come back to this world, accompanied by all the glorified and risen saints.
- c) Jesus will establish His personal reign on this earth. Satan will be bound. Evil will be restricted. This period of time is called the "millennium" in the Scriptures. Satan will be loosed briefly at the close of this time and will lead rebellion against Jesus one more time.

- d) The wicked and those who have rejected Jesus Christ as Saviour will be raised and judged. Believers will be rewarded. Sinners will be judged. Satan and all that is evil will be permanently punished in the lake of fire.

References: Matthew 24:15-31, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20:1-15

2. The Final State

A final restoration follows the Millennium and the Judgment in which heaven and earth will be regenerated in a perfect state to last forever.

Every person who has ever lived has been assigned a place.

References: 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1-27

A. Heaven. Heaven is the home of the righteous. It is a paradise free of evil, sickness and death. Jesus describes it as a home where He and His followers would dwell forever. It is described also as a place of beauty where God's glory shines brightly.

References: John 14:2-3; Revelation 21:1-27

B. Hell. Hell is a place of torment prepared for Satan, his angels, and the unsaved. Eternal separation from God, extreme suffering, remorse and hopelessness characterize this eternal judgment.

References: Revelation 20:11-15

Conclusion

In 1 Timothy 4:6, Paul points out how mutually dependent doctrine, faith, and practice are in the Christian life. "If you instruct the brothers in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of good doctrine which you have carefully followed."

The effective leader, teacher, and parent will understand and trust the basic doctrines of Scripture. They will then incorporate these beliefs into their daily life so that disciples and children will have role models to follow.

