

# DOCTRINE

WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE  
AND WHY IT'S GOOD

saltchurch.

# DOCTRINE WEEK 10 • 21-25 SEP

**DIRECTION:** This is our last week in our Doctrine series, digging into the heavy but incredibly important subject of the Future God has promised to His people, and the future to come to those who remain His enemies.

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**PRAY TO START:** For God's help to think and feel rightly about this topic.

## LAST WEEK OF THE SERIES

- This is the last week in our Doctrine series! What's 1 thing you loved or learned in this series? How has it changed the way you relate to God?

## INTO THE BIBLE

### Read Revelation 20:11-21:4

- What strikes you most about these descriptions of the final Judgement Day, of heaven and of hell? How do you feel about them?
- What's 1-2 things about heaven you're looking forward to? Is there anything you're *not* looking forward to about heaven?
- Does hell seem fair and reasonable to you? What is it about God that makes eternal punishment for rejecting God appropriate?  
*Anselm of Canterbury (in 1000 AD) said that if we think hell is unfair we don't yet realise how serious a thing it is to sin against a Holy God.*
- Michael mentioned 3 "false comforts" we can be tempted to turn to: that hell is extinction/annihilation rather than eternal judgement, that everyone will be saved in the end, that there's a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance after death.

What's attractive about these errors? What's the problem with them?

### Read Revelation 21:5 and John 3:16-18

- How confident are you that you will be welcomed into heaven? Why? When your confidence wavers, what causes it to waver?
- Do heaven & hell feel real to you? Or is there part of you that finds them unbelievable? Do you think about them very often?

Read Matthew 28:16-20, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Romans 1:16

- From these passages, what does God want us to do?
- Do you think this is a task for some Christians or all Christians?
- How do you think God saves people from hell?
- Do you ever feel like God can save people but he probably won't? How do these verses challenge you?

## PRAY TO END

Praise God for his forgiveness and acceptance of us through Jesus.

Ask for God to graciously save those who we love who don't have this forgiveness – and to give us opportunities to speak the gospel of Jesus, the courage to speak them, a deep love for lost people that's willing to cop rejection for their good, and above all a longing for God to be glorified by saving more people.

# DOCTRINE WEEK 9 • 14-18 SEP

**DIRECTION:** This is our 2<sup>nd</sup> last week in our Doctrine series & we're thinking 'church'. The church belongs to God and exists for God. We're caught up into that reality by his amazing grace – we are gathered by God around Jesus – so need to do and be the church in the way God tells us to. This is also our last week of *Why I Believe*, 7:30pm this Friday, so keep praying!

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**PRAY TO START:** Give thanks that through Jesus we have come *'to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem... to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God...'* (Heb 12:22-23)

## TO KICK US OFF

**SHARE HOPE:** Did anyone get to watch *Why I Believe* with a friend?

**FROM THE SERMON:** What stood out to you? What did you learn or love? Any questions you have (from the sermon or in general)? Disagreements?

- Think back to the 1<sup>st</sup> time you visited Salt Church. What was that experience like? What did you notice most of all?

## INTO THE BIBLE

**Read Matt 16:15-18 and Acts 20:28**

- How do these passages describe Church? Is that the way you generally describe Salt Church? Why, why not?

*We all choose a church we'll join & be part of, & we say it's 'my church'. Behind that is the reality that God made the church & owns it, so in a dramatically more profound way God says it's 'My Church'. It's God's long before it's ours.*

**Read Ephesians 2:4-7, 3:10**

- From these verses *how* did God make the church? *Why* did he make it?

*God made the Church for himself – to show his glory and wisdom, to display it to the universe & spiritual realm. By God's amazing grace to us, we're caught up in that cosmic display and participate in it as his people.*

- God cares about his church more than we ever could. How does that comfort and/or challenge you?

Read John 13:34-35 and Ephesians 4:25-5:2 – here's 2 of the many NT descriptions of how we're meant to treat each other as the church.

- What stands out to you?
- What reasons are given for these commands? Do you notice a common theme in the reasons?

*They're all directed to how we treat other believers in our church family, preventing harm and promoting the good of our brothers & sisters. i.e. how we act in church and towards our church family is crucially important to God.*

- Have you ever felt uncomfortable at Salt Church? What caused that discomfort? What did you do to overcome that discomfort?
- Saying yes to regularly coming to church means saying no to other good things. What are the things you might need to *start* saying no to / are *already* saying no to but find that hard to do?
- Who do you think church is for: believers or unbelievers or both? How would different answers change what we do when we meet as church?

*In 1 Cor 14:22-26 Paul explains church is for building believers in the faith, but needs to be accessible and understandable so unbelievers might trust the gospel.*

## PRAY TO END

Praise God for gathering us around Jesus so we can be part of His church, gathered with other believers to worship our glorious King Jesus! Ask for God's help to be and do church the way he wants us to.

# DOCTRINE WEEK 8 • 7-11 SEP

**DIRECTION:** This week we're digging into 2 big things the Holy Spirit does in Christians. 1<sup>st</sup> is regeneration (aka being born again), which happens at the start of our Christian lives – or more accurately *causes* the start of our Christian lives. 2<sup>nd</sup> is transformation, which happens throughout the rest of our Christian lives, until we're finally made perfect when Jesus returns. Both are things God in Trinity does (the Father, Son and Spirit do these together), but they're especially work attributed to the Holy Spirit.

It'd also be great to plug & pray for *Why I Believe* week 2, 7:30pm this Friday.

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**PRAY TO START:** Give thanks that the Holy Spirit has been '*poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour*' (Titus 3:6).

TO KICK US OFF

**SHARE HOPE:** Did anyone get to watch *Why I Believe* with a friend?

**FROM THE SERMON:** What stood out to you? What did you learn or love? Any questions you have (from the sermon or in general)? Disagreements?

THE SPIRIT'S WORK - TO START OUR CHRISTIAN LIVES

**Read John 3:3-6, Titus 3:3-7 and 1 Corinthians 2:12-14**

- What does the Holy Spirit do in us?
- Think back to when you 1<sup>st</sup> started trusting & following Jesus. Do these descriptions of the Holy Spirit's work line up with your experience?
- Geoff said this in his sermon on Sunday. How do you react?

You can look at becoming a Christian from 2 directions. From our side we need to repent and believe in Jesus. From the other side the Holy Spirit gives us new birth so we *can* repent and believe in Jesus. It starts with God though: we'd never repent and believe in Jesus *unless* the Holy Spirit was at work in us *first*.

- What confidence does the work of Holy Spirit give us as we seek to Share the Hope of Jesus with our unbelieving friends and family?

## THE SPIRIT'S WORK - TO CONTINUE OUR CHRISTIAN LIVES

### Read Galatians 5:16-25, Philippians 1:6 and 2:12-13

- What do these passages tell us to do? How are you going at that? Where are you fighting hard? Where are you failing?
- Do you ever feel like you've 'arrived' as a Christian and you're transformed enough? How do these passages challenge you?
- Do you ever feel like you've given up hope that parts of your life could really change? How do these passages encourage you?
- In being transformed and growing: how do you think God's work and our work fit together?

*We're not passive, nor are we left on our own. We work because God's at work in us. And since God's at work in us, the glory and credit goes to him. See also 1 Cor 15:9-10, Col 1:28-29.*

- What should we expect growing as a Christian to look like?

### PRAY TO END

Praise our Father God and our Lord Jesus that He sent His Spirit to start our Christian life and to continue it to the end! Ask for help to 'live by the Spirit' (Gal 5:25) and not giving into the desires of the flesh.

# DOCTRINE WEEK 7 • 1-4 SEP

**DIRECTION:** There are many different ideas among Christians as to what the Holy Spirit does & is on about. We'll tackle what the Holy Spirit does *in us* next week & dive headfirst into those differences. For this week we'll start at a more important & fundamental place: what does the Holy Spirit do *in Jesus*. The big mission & passion of the Holy Spirit is the mission of the Son.

Also, don't forget *Why I Believe* kicks off 7:30pm this Friday. Be great to pray: for Tim as he preps the content, technology to work smoothly, people to tune in, plus for anyone from your group who's watching it with someone.

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**PRAY TO START:** Give thanks that we've *'received... the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us'* (1 Cor 2:12)

## TO KICK US OFF

**SHARE HOPE:** Does anyone have a story or prayer point for an unbelieving friend we're praying for?

**FROM THE SERMON:** What stood out to you? What did you learn or love? Any questions you have (from the sermon or in general)? Disagreements?

## THE HOLY SPIRIT'S MAIN WORK

- What would *you* say is the main / most exciting work of the Holy Spirit?
- Turns out the main & most exciting work of the Spirit is all to do with Jesus. Look at these verses to see how focused on Jesus the Spirit is.
  - Before Jesus' birth: **1 Peter 1:10-12, Luke 1:34-35**
  - During Jesus' life: **Luke 3:21-22, Luke 4:14-19**
  - In Jesus' death: **Hebrews 9:13-14**
  - After Jesus' ascension: **Acts 1:8-9, 1 Corinthians 12:3**
  - In Jesus' return: **Revelation 22:12, 17**

- How do you react to this statement from Michael's sermon on Sunday?

*'What's the Holy Spirit's great passion? What's been the Holy Spirit's great mission? It's Jesus! The Holy Spirit is passionate about Jesus & his mission. So, the Spirit filled person is the person who lives for & honours Jesus. And the Spirit filled church is the Church that has Jesus & his mission at the centre.'*

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

- What do you think it might look like to make much of the Holy Spirit in your life & in Salt Church?
- To even the scales, should we talk about the God the Spirit as much as we talk about God the Father & God the Son? Why, why not?
- Should we do these things to the Holy Spirit – why, why not?
  - Thank him
  - Sing to him
  - Pray to him
  - Ask him for things
- Are you as passionate about Jesus & his mission as the Spirit is?
- In what practical ways could you be more on about Jesus this week, so that you honour God the Spirit?

## PRAY TO END

Praise our Trinitarian God that the Father sent the Spirit to be at work in the Son. Ask God to help us truly worship & honour the Spirit.

# DOCTRINE WEEK 6 • 24-28 AUG

**DIRECTION:** When the resurrected Jesus appears to Thomas he calls him "my Lord & my God" (John 20:28). Jesus is not only *the* Lord & Saviour. Through his life, death, resurrection & ascension he's become *our* Lord & Saviour. Similar to last week, this bible discussion will get us diving into a whole bunch of passages to show how massive are the things Jesus has done for all who trust in and submit to him as their Saviour & Lord.

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**PRAY TO START:** *Help us 'have power... to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ' (Eph 3:18)*

TO KICK US OFF

**SHARE HOPE:** Does anyone have a story or prayer point for an unbelieving friend we're praying for?

**FROM THE SERMON:** What stood out to you? What did you learn or love? Any questions you have (from the sermon or in general)? Disagreements?

WHAT JESUS HAS DONE

Like last week, look at passages to get a huge picture of what Jesus' done.

*You can read: 1 at a time as a group & think about it, a few at once, in pairs & report back to the group). If you're short on time, just read the 1 Peter verses.*

**Romans 3:25-28 | Col 1:13-14, 1:21-22, 2:13-14 | 1 Peter 1:1-2, 1:18-19, 2:24-25, 3:18 | Revelation 5:9-14**

- What stands out to you in these descriptions of things Jesus has done?
  - Here are some images / metaphors from these passages that describe Jesus' work. Try and define each in your own words. Jesus' work:
1. Is a sacrifice of atonement
  2. Rescued us
  3. Redeemed us
  4. Reconciled us to God
  5. Made us alive
  6. Cancelled our legal debt
  7. Bore our sins
  8. Heals us
  9. Brings us to God
  10. Purchased us for God

*The NT uses lots of images & metaphors to show the nature or impact of Jesus' work – these 10 are just some of them! By “metaphors” I don't mean these things aren't true, but rather that the NT takes language & ideas from the OT & from Jewish / Greek / Roman culture to unpack what Jesus has done. For e.g. being 'rescued' is about being saved from an enemy (like in the Exodus), and being 'reconciled' is about peace between people who were fighting.*

*There's value in simply being overwhelmed by all these images! But there's also value in understanding each one. For e.g. these 2 things (being rescued by Jesus & being reconciled to God through Jesus) are both amazing! But they're not the same thing, & they're even more amazing when we see the difference.*

## BRINGING IT TOGETHER

- With all these passages in mind:
  - How do you feel about Jesus?
  - How should you treat Jesus?
- Can you have Jesus as your Saviour but not your Lord? Do you have to obey Jesus to be saved by Jesus? Does it even matter?

*1) If Jesus wasn't Lord of the universe, he wouldn't have power or authority to save us. You can't have one without the other: we follow the saving Lord.*

*2) We're not saved by obeying, either at the start or end of our Christian life, so it's always Jesus' work that makes us right with God. But we are saved to obey: that's the new life we're saved for.*

*3) Yes! Telling people 'Jesus died for you so you can be forgiven' isn't the full & true gospel. To paraphrase 1 Peter 1:2 we're saved by Jesus' sacrifice in our place, to enjoy a new life where we are to obey Jesus.*

- What could it look like for you to be obedient to Jesus this week?

## PRAY TO END

Praise God for sending His Son Jesus to do all this for us when we were totally helpless & couldn't do it ourselves! Ask for his help to obey, trust, worship & love our Saving Lord.

# DOCTRINE WEEK 5 • 17-21 AUG

**DIRECTION:** “Jesus is fully God & fully man”. “God added humanity into the Godhead in the person of His Son”. Jesus is one person with “two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation”. Jesus was “begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days... born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood”. These are phrases Christians have used across the Centuries to describe who Jesus is, and how his divinity & humanity co-exist. The one we call on as Lord and Saviour is the God-man.

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**PRAY TO START:** Help us to get a deeper grasp of who Jesus is so we might worship him as the one *“worthy... to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”* (Revelation 5:12)

## TO KICK US OFF

**SHARE HOPE:** Does anyone have a story or prayer point for an unbelieving friend we’re praying for?

**FROM THE SERMON:** What stood out to you? What did you learn or love? Any questions you have (from the sermon or in general)? Disagreements?

## WHO IS JESUS

Let’s start with a bunch of passages to give a huge & wide picture of Jesus.

**Read Luke 2:52, 3:21-38** (please only skim it!), **John 1:1-5, 14:6-9; Hebrews 1:1-3, 2:14-18, 4:15-16; Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:15-20.**

- What stands out to you in these descriptions of Jesus?
- In these situations, do you tend to focus more on Jesus' *humanity* or his *divinity*? Do the verses we looked at challenge that at all for you?
  - When you read the bible
  - When you talk to Christian friends about Jesus
  - When you ask for forgiveness after you've sinned
  - When you are praying
  - When you talk to unbelievers about Jesus

## WHY IT MATTERS

- How does Jesus being the God-man helps us in these areas? (If you can, think how *both* his divinity and humanity impact these things).
  - Knowing God
  - Being reconciled with God (i.e. at peace through the cross)
  - Knowing us and what it's like to be human
  - His authority to tell us how to live
  - Being an example to us

**Knowing God:** the true God was revealed in the things the human Jesus said and did with his body, e.g. John 1:14-18.

**Reconciled:** only the God-man could make atonement to reconcile humanity to God. He is the answer to the problem of Ps 49:7-9 *'No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them – the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough – so that they should live on forever and not see decay.'* No-one can redeem... except for God himself! Which he does by sending his Son as a representative man who substitutes himself for all mankind (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

**Knowing us:** in his divine omniscience the Son knows what it is to be human (e.g. Psalm 103:13-14, 139:1-6). Plus, now by personal experience he knows the joys and heartbreaks of being human, and the difficulties of resisting temptation.

**Authority:** Jesus is the Lord God who rules all and commands humans (Matt 28:18-20), and he also perfectly lived out the things he commands in his life on earth.

**Example:** Jesus' human life gives us the perfect example of what it looks like to be a human who lives for, and in right relationship with, God. We're called to imitate Jesus' actions, e.g. 1 Pet 2:21, 1 Cor 11:1. At the same time, it's the *God-man* we imitate, who not only lived perfectly but *is* perfection itself, e.g. Matt 5:48.

**PRAY TO END:** Praise God that: *"our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, through whom all things were made, for us and for our salvation... came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human."* (taken from the Nicene Creed, 381 AD)

### BONUS QUESTION IF YOUR GROUP IS REALLY KEEN:

- Explain how you think Jesus' humanity & divinity fit together?

The Chalcedonian Creed (451 AD) said Jesus is 1 person (i.e. 1 Jesus) with 2 natures (divine and human). This '2 natures in 1 person' is:

**Without confusion:** Jesus is not God & man put in a blender & mixed together to make a new substance. He's the God-man "unblended", with all the qualities of God & man still there, without 1 interfering with or undermining the other.

**Without change:** in fully taking on humanity Jesus didn't change God. God the Son *added* humanity to his person, he didn't take anything away.

**Without division:** Jesus' 2 natures are distinct, but you can't divide them. This is the purpose of saying he is *one person* with 2 natures, i.e.

Whenever we look at the life of Christ and ask, *Who* did this? *Who* said this? *Who* suffered death for us? the answer is always the same: God the Son. *Why?* Because it is not the divine or human nature which acts and thus does things; rather it is the *person* of the Son acting in and through the divine and human natures. It is the *Son* who was born, baptized, tempted, transfigured, betrayed, arrested, condemned, and who died. It was the *Son* who shed his blood for us to secure our salvation. It is in the *Son* that all of God's righteous demands are met so that our salvation is ultimately of God. It is the *Son* who also rose from the dead and who now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Stephen Wellum: *God the Son Incarnate*, 306–7)

**Without separation:** the Son's 2 natures were united in the 1 person of Jesus when he was conceived in the incarnation. From that point until forever they will never be separated – *'not since he was conceived, not when he was crucified, and not now as he sits, fully human, on the throne of heaven. Jesus will always be God, always be human, and always be one person.'* ([www.desiringgod.org/articles/no-mere-god](http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/no-mere-god))

# DOCTRINE WEEK 4 • 10-14 AUG

**DIRECTION:** In this discussion we'll look at 3 dimensions of what it is to be human: who we were made to be (in God's image), who we were before Jesus saved us (sinners), who we are now as Christians (saved & changing).

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**PRAY TO START:** Help us see the privilege of being made in your image: as David says *'what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?'* (Psalm 8:4, 9)

**TO KICK US OFF**

**SHARE HOPE:** Does anyone have a story or prayer point for an unbelieving friend we're praying for?

**FROM THE SERMON:** What stood out to you? What did you learn or love? Any questions you have (from the sermon or in general)? Disagreements?

**HUMANITY AS WE WERE MADE TO BE**

**Read Genesis 1:26-31**

- What do you think it means to be made 'in God's image'?
- Since all humans are made in God's image, how does that impact...
  - How we treat people who earn more or less money than us?
  - How we treat people from a different race or with a different skin colour to ours?
  - How we treat unborn children, disabled people, the elderly?
  - How we treat violent criminals, terrorists, and people who commit war crimes?
  - Our search for meaning and purpose?

**HUMANITY AS WE ARE - WITHOUT CHRIST**

**Read Romans 3:9-12 and Ephesians 2:1-3**

- What do these descriptions tell us all humans are like?
- Do you think and feel like this is true of *all* people? Is it true to the same extent in everyone?

- Discuss these statements. Do you agree / disagree? Why, why not?
  - Sin is when you fail to live by your own standards
  - Sin is failing to reach the potential of all God wants you to be
  - Sin is breaking the law
  - Sin is rejecting God

## HUMANITY AS WE ARE - WITH CHRIST

### Read Ephesians 2:4-10

- What has happened to us who trust Jesus? How? Why?
- What 'good works' might God have prepared for you to do tomorrow?
- What do you think of these lyrics (from [In His Image by Nicky Chiswell](#))

*From the dust of the ground we were formed  
You breathed life into us; we were born  
Man and woman, you made us to be  
In your image, we have dignity*

*Jesus came in the flesh to this world  
The exact perfect picture of God  
Entered into the mess from this fall  
He was shattered that we might be whole*

*In His image, we have been made  
Though we see shattered remains  
In His image, Jesus our Lord  
One day soon we'll be restored  
In His image*

- As you look at all the problems, injustices and evils in the world today:
  - Which things affect you most & bring you anger & sadness?
  - What do you think humans most need to know or do?

### Read 1 John 1:8-9

- As Christians we'll keep battling sin our whole lives. In pairs (or guys and girls if that works) confess one sin to each other, then give thanks for the promise in this verse: that God *will* forgive and purify you.

PRAY TO END: Praise God that we have purpose – lives to live as His image bearers, through Jesus, and ask for His help to live it!

# DOCTRINE WEEK 3 • 3-7 AUG

**DIRECTION:** This week we're looking at 'God'. It doesn't get much bigger than that – or more relevant: knowing God changes everything. For your Group discussion there are many directions your conversation could go. So, in the notes there are verses to unpack different aspects of who God is. Choose whatever your group is most interested in exploring. If you're finding your Group isn't engaging as deeply with the Doctrine series as they usually do (perhaps feeling like they 'know this already') try asking devil's advocate curly questions to help people see how these truths affect their lives.

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**PRAY TO START:** Help us to marvel at you, and follow your invitation to *'be still and know that I am God'* (Psalm 46:10)

## TO KICK US OFF

**SHARE HOPE:** Does anyone have a story or prayer point for an unbelieving friend we're praying for?

**FROM THE SERMON:** What stood out to you? What did you learn or love? Any questions you have (from the sermon or in general)? Disagreements?

## GOING DEEPER

God is big! So choose the aspect of God you want to explore, read some verses, then chat about what they teach us and how to respond.

- **Trinity:** Matt 28:16-20, John 14:6-10, John 14:15-20, Rom 8:14-16, 2 Cor 13:14, Eph 4:3-6, Col 1:15-17, Heb 1:1-4, 1 Peter 1:1-2.
- **Judge:** Psalm 94:1-11, Prov 21:15, Matt 25:31-33, John 3:16-18, Rom 9:18-24, Rom 12:19-21, Rom 14:10-13, 1 Pet 1:17-19, Rev 20:11-15.
- **Eternal & Unchanging:** Numbers 23:19, 1 Sam 15:27-29, Psalm 90:1-4, Psalm 102:25-28, Isaiah 40:28-31, Malachi 3:6, Heb 13:8, 1 Pet 1:23-25
- **Sovereign & Providential:** Psalm 104:27-32, Prov 16:9, Prov 16:33, Prov 21:1, Isaiah 45:5-7, Dan 4:34-35, Matt 6:25-27, Acts 4:23-28, Rom 9:19-21, Rom 11:33-36, 1 Cor 10:13, Php 2:9-13, Php 4:6-7, James 4:13-16.

- Geoff listed some of God's attributes. Which things from this list...
  - Stand out most to you?
  - Are confusing and you're not sure you understand them?
  - Do you disagree with or dislike?

Only God	Perfect	Holy	Loving	Redeemer
Sustainer	Limitless	Pure	Merciful	Saviour
Knowable	Wrathful	Complete	Gracious	Comforter
Personal	Faithful	Indivisible	Eternal	All: Knowing,
Self-Sufficient	Good	Impassable	Trinity	Seeing, and
Compassionate	Spiritual	Righteous	Jealous	Powerful
Unchanging	Almighty	Angry	Just	Alone worthy
Transcendent	Glorious	Sinless	True	of worship
Sovereign	Wise	Patient	Humble	
Providential	Creator	Living	Judge	<i>...for a start...</i>

- This is what our Salt statement of beliefs says *About God*. Which things:
  - Stand out most to you?
  - Are confusing and you're not sure you understand them?
  - Do you disagree with or dislike?

*About God: There is one unique and eternal God, who exists in an everlasting loving relationship of Father, Son and Spirit – one God in three persons. God is sovereign in all things: including creation, revelation, redemption, judgement and the establishing of His kingdom. As sovereign loving creator and redeemer, He is worthy of all glory, honour and praise.*

- How do you react to this quote? Does this sound like too much work? "How can we turn our knowledge *about* God into knowledge *of* God? The rule for doing so is simple but demanding. It is that we turn each truth that we learn *about* God into matter for mediation *before* God, leading to prayer and praise *to* God." (J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pg. 23)
- Do you think God is pleased by how well you know Him? Why, why not?

PRAY TO END: Praise God that we can call Him Father and truly know Him!

# DOCTRINE WEEK 2 • 27-31 JUL

**DIRECTION:** In our 2<sup>nd</sup> week of this series we're unpacking the doctrine of the Word of God. What do we believe about the Bible? Our God speaks. The bible contains God's words. Especially from and about the Son, who is God's Word in flesh. It's written by humans via God's Spirit. It's sufficient for life and godliness, and leads us to salvation in Jesus. It is God's personal word to us to make himself known. So we want to honour and value it above every other truth statement and authority! We want to trust it, test everything against it, and unleash God's Word to teach and transform us.

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**PRAY TO START:** Help us love your Word, so we too can say: *'How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Ps 119:103)*

## TO KICK US OFF

### SHARE HOPE...

- Does anyone have a story or prayer point to share for one of their unbelieving friends we're praying for?

### FROM THE SERMON...

- What stood out to you or made the biggest impact on you? What did you learn or love?
- What questions do you still have (either from the sermon or in general about this doctrine)? Anything you disagreed with?

## GOING DEEPER

- **Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17.** What does the bible do for us? Why?
- Michael said: *'the bible is all we need to know God, to please Him, to be an effective Christian'*. Look at v17 again. Would it be true to say the bible is all you need to make every decision – why, why not?
- When you need to make a choice, but you're not sure what the bible has to say about it, how could you quickly find that out?
- **Read Luke 24:27, 44-45.** Jesus tells us the bible is all about him. Do you ever make yourself the centre of the bible's story? Why do we do that?
- Michael said this. How does this lead you to praise God?

*"In the pages of the bible we meet God. Without which we would be in the dark, we would not know Him. [...] If we want to know God himself, God meets us in the pages of the Bible! The Bible's not just information about God. It's not a handbook for life, not a rule book. It's God's personal revelation of himself. It's God introducing himself to us."*

- Are there parts of the bible or ideas in the bible that you disagree with at the moment? How could you work through that?
- What might it look like to sit under God's Word as your ultimate authority, even when you're not sure you agree with or like bits of it?

*Here's a suggestion of a good way to respond when we disagree with the bible:*

**Pray:** *the most helpful thing is to pray about it and raise your doubts with God – you're probably not the first child of His across the history of the Church that has wrestled with this, and He's big enough to handle all your anger, doubts and fears. Talk about it with God as part of your daily ongoing relationship with Him, and ask God to 'guide you into all the truth' (John 16:13), confident that 'the Lord will give you insight into all this' (2 Tim 2:7), and ask for His help so you can 'Humble yourselves... under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up' (1 Pet 5:6).*

**Think:** *Having prayed, work hard at trying to understand what God is saying and why He says it. It may be that what you're reacting to is not actually what the bible's saying, and a bit of work will clear things up. Be like the Bereans, who 'examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true' (Acts 17:11). At this point other Christians, sermons, articles, books, etc. are super helpful.*

**Reflect:** *As you think, reflect on what you are bringing to the bible that makes it hard for you to accept this. Why is this difficult for you, in particular? What is at stake for you? What are you afraid might happen if you accepted this and lived different?*

- Read these verses about how to treat God's word. How do they spur you on: **Psalm 19:7-11, Matt 7:24, Acts 17:11-12, Col 3:16-17, Hebrews 3:12-13, and James 1:22-25.**

*You could split into pairs, allocate a verse and ask people to chat about it then report back to the group, or read 1 at a time and chat as a whole group, or (my suggestion) read all of them at once as a whole block of amazing verses then chat.*

**PRAY TO END:** Praise God for His glorious Word! Ask Him to help us learn it, pay attention to it, and joyfully submit to all that He has said.

# DOCTRINE WEEK 1 • 20-24 JUL

**DIRECTION:** In this series we'll look at a Doctrine on Sunday *and then* discuss and apply it in our Small Groups (here's an explanation for [why we're doing it this way](#)). We had the series launch on Sunday where Michael told us 1) what doctrine is, 2) why it's good, and 3) what difference it makes.

Take this first week in your Small Group to suss out what people are expecting from this series, to what people's appetites for what's ahead, and to work together to create a good culture of healthy robust discussion as we wrestle with big life-changing truths in the weeks ahead.

Plus explain to people that we'll also be trying to share our hope and pray for 1-3 unbelieving friends and family each week of this series too.

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**PRAY TO START:** Pray that through this Doctrine series God will help us to become stronger disciples of Jesus who are firm in our beliefs and not *"infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching"* (Ephesians 4:14)

## EXPECTATIONS OF THE SERIES

- How did you react when you heard we were doing a "Doctrine Series"? What are you expecting from it?
- Where would you place yourself on these scales:

How I'm feeling:            1 (sounds boring) ----- 10 (I'm excited)

Learning new things:    1 (worried) ----- 10 (curious)

What I believe:            1 (confused about it) ----- 10 (clear about it)

- In your own words, how would you define "doctrine"?

## DISCUSSING

- **Read Ephesians 4:11-16.** What is Christ Jesus' vision for his church? How does that vision become a reality?

*Jesus is growing his church to become mature, which looks like believing the right things (i.e. with sound doctrine) and living the right way. That happens as people with the word teach it (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) and as everyone speaks the truth in love.*

- Michael said this in his sermon. How do you react to it?

*In the end it's not a question of whether you'll "go with doctrine" or not, whether you "like" doctrine or not. You already have doctrine. The question is actually: will your doctrine, your teaching, your understanding be good or will it be false? Will it be sound doctrine or false doctrine? Will your version of reality be yours or will it be God's? Will it be the true and living God that you're relating to, revealed to us in the pages of the bible, or will it be a false God?*

APPLYING: What's 1 piece of Doctrine that has changed how you live?

- In this series we might discover some things we believe aren't right, or we don't feel some things God teaches are good. Practically, how can we have a healthy culture in our Small Group where we: wrestle with and seek and speak the *truth* – but do that *in love*?

*E.g. where we wrestle with what's true and good and seek to believe and live out what God says, but yet don't put unhelpful pressure on each other to conform, or change immediately, or be afraid of speaking up if we have different beliefs.*

SHARE HOPE:

- EXPLAIN: to people that we'll pray for 1-3 friends or family who aren't Christians during this series – to help us avoid a danger of a doctrine series where we become inward looking, and because the God we're learning about loves the lost. ([Here's an e.g. of how to explain this](#)).
- ASK: people to share the names and some brief info of 1-3 friends or family who don't trust Jesus yet, that they'd love to pray for.

PRAY TO END: Michael said he's praying this series will do 4 things for us. Pray for these 4 things, plus your unbelieving friends. That we will...

1. Get to know God better, and will praise and enjoy God more.
2. Become stronger disciples, not unsettled but clear on what God thinks.
3. Be unified as a Church on the essentials of Christianity, and gracious to each other with the non-essentials.
4. Be a more compelling witness to a world that doesn't know God.

**IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME:** list the [doctrines we'll unpack](#) and ask people: a) what questions do you have about those topics? b) what difference would it make if you understand better what God tells us about them?

# SERIES BREAKUP

These are the Doctrines we'll unpack. They're not exhaustive – this is not *all* the Doctrines we could look at; there are more we won't get to. In fact, these aren't even *all the important foundational* Doctrines – across 10 weeks we won't even be able to cover all the truths all Christians agree are crucial. But these topics *are all things that all Christians agree really matter*, they're clear in the bible, foundational, crucial, and life-changing, so that's why we picked these topics in particular.

DATE	BIBLE	DATE	BIBLE
20-24 Jul	Why This Series	24-28 Aug	Jesus' Works
27-31 Jul	The Scriptures	31 Aug – 4 Sep	The Spirit of God
3-7 Aug	Our God	7-11 Sep	The Spirit's Works
10-14 Aug	Humanity	14-18 Sep	The Church
17-21 Aug	The Son of God	21-25 Sep	The Future

## A DIFFERENT ORDER

**Our usual practice in Small Groups** is to read and wrestle with the passage the week *before* we hear it preached on. We do this so we're not overly-reliant on the 'bible expert' to tell us what to think or blindly accepting what they say. Instead we all work to understand the truth and grow together.

**For this series we're flipping it around** – the sermon will be preached on Sunday *and then* we'll talk about it in our Small Groups the week *afterwards*. Why are we doing that?

**Doctrine deals with massive ideas.** Christians across the centuries have worked carefully to express Doctrinal truths so they say no more and no less than what God says in the Bible. If we attempt to explore any one of

these topics in our 1 hour bible discussion in a Small Group, we'd likely spend the whole time just trying to work out what the doctrine even is!

**We want to go much further though: we want the Doctrines to change us!**

To make us stronger disciples, grow our unity, glorify God. So we're going to let the preachers do the hard work of telling us what the Doctrine is, proving it from the bible, interacting with how Christians have expressed this truth across the centuries, and showing us why it's good and far better than the alternatives our culture pits against it.

**In our Small Groups we'll focus on the equally important task of applying these doctrines and living different because of them.** That's why we're flipping our usual order: so we can spend our time more profitably, responding to these Doctrines and applying them to our lives.

## TIPS FOR LEADING THIS SERIES

Here are 3 tips to get the most out of this series in your Small Group.

### **1. Get your group to listen to *all* the Sermons**

We haven't written Bible Discussion Notes ahead of time like we normally do. Instead you'll get emailed a new one for each week of the series, that interacts with what the preacher said in the Sermon.

The way you and your group can get the most out of your discussion is if you've all listened to the sermon beforehand (and the Mon night Q&A if you're even more keen).

So encourage your group to catch every sermon, and perhaps even set it as an expectation for this Series – a thing you're all going to commit to do.

In case someone misses a sermon though (and just as a good practise of letting the bible continue to be front and centre in all we do) each Bible Discussion Note will start with the main bible verse the preacher spoke from, and the Doctrine will be stated in a paragraph. Then there'll be a bunch of Application questions to chat through together.

### **2. Actually apply these Doctrines**

There can be a danger in getting so caught up in *discussing* Doctrine – how to word it, what it does and doesn't mean – that you forget to *apply* it to your life and live different because of it. Talking about Doctrine is never and should never be an end in itself. As the bible passages in the intro show us, God's truths are always meant to change and transform us.

The main reason we're flipping the order (preaching first then talking about it in Small Groups) is so we can spend good time working out how each Doctrine changes the way we think, feel and act. So make sure that – while you do the important task of *discussing* the Doctrine – you don't do that at the expense of the equally important task of *applying* it too.

### **3. Create a culture where no one's asked to change what they believe *immediately or too quickly***

God wants us to be united in the truth and He's revealed it so we'd know it. If we're wrong we want people to change their minds! But we're at different stages in our journeys with Jesus. None of us have perfect Doctrine and we all need to apply God's truth far far more than we currently do.

Some of us at Salt have grown up with a solid foundation of doctrine laid from a young age. For people like that, this series might feel like adding furniture and hanging paintings in a well-built house.

Some of us at Salt have *never* had a good foundation of doctrine laid, so this series will feel like ripping apart the house, tearing up the slab and laying a new slab. That's not an easy or quick process!

We want to work hard to believe and love God's truths, but we want to take the necessary time so people genuinely believe something different, rather than pressuring them to simply say what they think they ought to say.

We want to tackle this whole process with love, grace and patience. So give people time and space to react, to process, to feel uncomfortable, to wrestle with what God says and why. Don't close down the discussion if someone disagrees with what the preacher or the bible verses say – help them explore *why* they disagree, *where* that comes from, *whether* they've wrestled with it before in the bible, *what* they think is at stake.

The first sermon in the series (and God-willing every other sermon!) will set the tone for this, so you can use the same language in your Small Group.

# SHARE HOPE

**One of the things Doctrine does for us is drive us out on Mission** – to proclaim to the world around us how glorious God is, how good His truths are, and to call others to follow Christ too.

**One danger of a Doctrinal Series done badly is it makes Christians insular**, such that we end up disputing tiny points of minor difference and losing sight of the very God we're talking about! The God who loves the lost, who saved us, and who sends us to go make more lifelong disciples of Jesus.

**We want to Share the Hope of Jesus all the time as a Church.** During this Series we're going to help each other do that in our Small Groups in a particular way – by praying for 1-3 unbelieving friends each week.

**In your group each week give time to pray for 1-3 unbelieving friends**, family, co-workers, whoever. You can also give people in your group the opportunity to share a story or give an update if they've had a great conversation recently with one of these people.

**Jesus deserves people who trust and follow him**, so wouldn't it be so good if, while we're exploring these deep glorious things of God, someone, many people, start to follow this same God alongside us! That's exactly what Jesus deserves and what we long for as a Church.

**So pray** that as we are awe-struck by these massive truths about God one more time, the unbelievers we know will be awe-struck by these massive truths about God for the *very first time*.

# SERIES PURPOSES

We pray that looking at these Doctrines will lead all of us at Salt Church to:

1. **Glorify God:** true doctrine honours the God who revealed it, theology (studying God) leads to doxology (praising God)
2. **Be Stronger Disciples:** true doctrine makes us stronger disciples
  - a. *Fruit:* knowledge of God leads to live of godliness and a deeper relationship of joyful obedience to our God
  - b. *Conviction Driven:* when we see reality God's way we'll live in light of that, rather than being seduced or unsettled by alternate doctrines (from our unbelieving culture, other religions, or Christian distortions of the truth)
  - c. *New Skills:* if we can think from the foundations up, we'll all make more theologically-driven choices in our daily lives, and so please God more in our decisions
3. **Unity:** we want to be united by sharing the same core foundations, which strengthens our evangelism and our ability to grow each other to be lifelong disciples
4. **Mission:** we want unbelievers who hear the series to be drawn to Christ, as we show how alternative doctrines aren't true or good, whereas God's true doctrine in the bible is compelling and beautiful

# DOCTRINE INFO

## What Christians Believe and Why it's Good

In this series we'll take 10 weeks to explore 10 "doctrines" Christians believe – 10 truths we're committed to at Salt Church. According to [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) "Doctrine" is: "A belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a Church, political party, or other group".

### What are the 'beliefs' we hold to as Christians? What is true for us?

The bible tells us where to find truth:

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. (John 14:6)*

*All scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16)*

*"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" - the things God has prepared for those who love him - these are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit. (1 Cor 2:9-10)*

Paul reminds the Thessalonians how:

*You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess 1:9)*

*When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God (1 Thess 2:13)*

Like no-one else in the world can, Christians can see reality the way God does and live in light of it. We know what is true, how things really are, because God has made that known to us in His word by His Spirit. He has made it known *so that* we would receive it and live it. Which brings us to another question.

### But are these truths good?

Sometimes things are *painfully* true; they're right but not good for us, not appealing or compelling. Is God's truth like that? Not at all! In the words of John Piper, God's truth:

*'Satisfies the heart as well as the head'. It is 'not only right but also good. It is not only valid but also valuable, not only accurate but also admirable'. (Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, pg. 33)*

The goodness of God and so the goodness of His truth is plastered all through the bible:

*I delight in your decrees... Your statutes are my delight... I delight in your commands because I love them... You are good, and what you do is good... How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth... Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm 119:16, 24, 47, 68, 103, 105)*

*Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him (Psalm 34:8)*

*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:2-3)*

**The things God teaches are true and good. But what difference do they make? What happens if Christians don't have a firm doctrine?**

We would live an unprofitable life, since:

*Knowledge of the truth... leads to godliness (Titus 1:1)*

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)*

*We need to be filled: 'with the knowledge of [God's] will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God' (Col 1:9-10)*

In fact, not having and clinging to firm beliefs leaves Christians and churches in grave danger, as:

*infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming (Eph 4:14)*

Forgetting or turning away from the truth is a matter of life and death. As Paul says to the Galatians...

*I am astonished that you are so quickly... turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! (Gal 1:6-9)*

What we believe is a salvation issue. As Paul tells Timothy, a pastor:

*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:16)*

### What will this Series do for us?

Unpacking 10 crucial doctrines will make us stronger disciples, grow our unity as a Church, help us be more effective missionaries to unbelievers around us. But above all it'll bring God glory as we know him better, love him deeper, trust him firmly, and marvel at him with newfound wonder:

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

*How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!*

*"Who has known the mind of the Lord?*

*Or who has been his counsellor?"*

*"Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay them?"*

*For from him and through him and for him are all things.*

*To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)*