

## FUNDAMENTALS VS. FALSE BELIEFS

### FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH

“There are certain doctrines of the Christian faith which are absolutely fundamental. They are of the first importance. As far as they are concerned, there can be no difference of opinion. Believers must be united on these great truths.

“What are the fundamentals? When we speak of the fundamentals, we are referring to the following:

The inspiration of the Scriptures. The Bible is the Word of God.

The trinity. There is one God, existing eternally in Three Persons.

The deity of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is God.

The incarnation. Jesus is also perfect Man.

His substitutionary death on Calvary, His burial, resurrection, and ascension

to heaven.

The gospel. Salvation by grace, through faith, and apart from works.

The second advent. Christ is coming again. Though not all agree on the details of His return, the fact itself is a basic tenet of the faith.

The eternal punishment of the lost.

“Now these doctrines are not negotiable. We are to earnestly contend for them. They are clearly taught in the Scriptures. They have been held by the evangelical, orthodox church down through the centuries. Conflicting views have been labeled heresies. Believers have been willing to die for these precious truths. We cannot have fellowship with those who deny the fundamentals.” --William MacDonald

Fritz Ridenour echoes these ideas as he comments on the following verses:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”

--1 Cor. 15:3,4

“The word ‘orthodox’ comes from two Greek words that stand for ‘right belief’ or ‘right opinion’;...orthodox Christianity is built on the ideas and doctrines contained in these two verses of Scripture. There are other important doctrines in Christianity, true, but in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 is a ‘plumb line’ for measuring the difference between Christianity and other faiths....The orthodox Christian believes that Christ is God and that He died for man’s sins. The orthodox Christian believes that by nature, man is sinful, spiritually dead, and that his only hope of salvation from sin is faith in Christ’s death and resurrection. And the orthodox Christian believes that he has a Bible that is inspired by the living God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”

--Fritz Ridenour

We believe that a Christian is a person who has truly believed the gospel, the good news about Jesus. The Bible says, “for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16); and “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13).

### THE GOOD NEWS

Gospel means good news. The good news is that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” Each of these terms is important, and each is discussed below.

### JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the God/man. He is the eternally existing Son of God (Mic 5:2, Jn. 8:58, Heb. 13:8, Jn. 1:1,14, Heb. 1:8) who became a man to save us (1st Tim 2:5,6). “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). Salvation is based on Christ’s merit and work, not on our own (Titus 3:5, Galatians 2:16, 5:1-6). He is the only way to be made right with God (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). Salvation is a free gift (Romans 6:23) that is received by faith. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9).

## DEATH

Death in the Bible involves separation. “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God” (Isaiah 59:2). Death entered into the world because of sin (Romans 5:12). Death can be physical (Heb. 9:27), spiritual (Eph. 2:1), or eternal (2 Thessalonians 1:8,9).

## SIN

Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), falling short of God’s standards, breaking God’s Law. The Bible says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The Bible also says, “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

## THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures are the Word of God (John 10:35, 17:17), inerrant and infallible in the original autographs, fully inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16,17, 2 Peter 1:20,21), of absolute authority in all matters. Belief in the authority of Scripture and submission to the authority of Scripture are necessary consequences of our submission to the lordship of Jesus.

How does this all fit together to form the good news? The Bible tells us that God is both loving (1 John 4:8) and just (Deut. 32:4). God in His love desires a right relationship with everyone, but God in His justice cannot ignore sin. The Bible says that “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Man, because of his sin, is separated from a right relationship with God, and unless this condition is remedied in this life, it will lead to eternal death (Heb. 9:27, 2 Thess. 1:8,9), eternal separation from God.

The good news is that God sent His Son Jesus to save us. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

What must a person do? “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31).

## FELLOWSHIP

Our fellowship is with those who have believed the true gospel. How important is this? The Bible says, “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). The word preach is *euangelizo* in Greek. Vines defines it as “to bring, or declare, good, or glad, tidings.”

We should not welcome into fellowship those who bring the wrong gospel.

“Simply as history the event of Jesus Christ is unique. Christian faith goes a great deal further in its interpretation of that event. It maintains that in Jesus the one thing that needed to happen has happened in such a way that it need never happen again... Making such claims, Christians are bound to affirm that all men need the Gospel. For the human sickness there is one specific remedy, and this is it. There is no other. Therefore the Gospel must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth and to the end of time. The Church cannot compromise on its missionary task without ceasing to be the Church. If it fails to see and accept this responsibility, it is changing the Gospel into something other than itself... Naturally, to the non-Christian hearer this must sound like crazy megalomania, and religious imperialism of the very worst kind. We must recognize the dangers; Christians have on many occasions fallen into both of them. But we are driven back ultimately on the question of truth.”

--Stephen Neill

## FALSE BELIEFS: ERRORS IN DOCTRINE

Unfortunately, not all accept the essentials of Christianity. Some groups may claim to be Christian, yet reject Christianity’s fundamental tenets; often these groups are referred to as “cults.” Other groups reject the Christian message outright.

“From a theological viewpoint, the cults contain many major deviations from historic Christianity. Yet paradoxically, they continue to insist that they are entitled to be classified as Christians....We are consistently being told in books, articles, council pronouncements and ecumenical conclaves, that we must ‘play down the things that divide us and emphasize those things which make for unity.’ This is all well and good, if we are speaking about a

firm foundation of doctrinal, as well as of moral and ethical truth, and if we are speaking about true unity within the body of Christ. But if, as some suggest, this be broadened to include those who are not in agreement with the essentials of Biblical Christianity, we must resolutely oppose it....

“The American Banking Association has a training program....Each year it sends hundreds of bank tellers to Washington in order to teach them to detect counterfeit money, which is a great source of loss of revenue to the Treasury Department. It is most interesting that during the entire two-week training program, no teller touches counterfeit money. Only the original passes through his hands. The reason for this is that that the American Banking Association is convinced that if a man is thoroughly familiar with the original, he will not be deceived by the counterfeit bill, no matter how much like the original it appears. It is the contention of this writer that if the average Christian would become familiar once again with the great foundations of his faith, he would be able to detect those counterfeit elements so apparent in the cult systems, which set them apart from Biblical Christianity....

“The student of cultism, then, must be prepared to scale the language barrier of terminology. First, he must recognize that it does exist, and second, he must acknowledge the very real fact that unless terms are defined when one is either speaking or reading cult theology, the semantic jungle which the cults have created will envelop him, making difficult, if not impossible, a proper contrast between the teaching of the cults and those of orthodox Christianity.” --Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*

Who are some of these groups? The following are some groups that hold to serious errors in their doctrines:

Christian Science	Spiritualism	Jehovah's Witness
Armstrongism	Mormanism	The Way International
Unity	Unification Church	Theosophy
Scientology	Baha'i Faith	Islam
Hinduism	Buddhism	Secular Humanism
New Age	Hare Krishna	Transcendental Meditation
Rosicrucianism	Zoroastrianism	Sikhism
Existentialism	Marxism	Atheism

## FALSE BEHAVIOR: ERRORS IN PRACTICE

It is also possible for a group to acknowledge the fundamentals of the faith and yet become cult-like in their practices.

“Spiritually abusive groups routinely use guilt, fear, and intimidation as effective means for controlling their members. In my opinion, the leaders consciously foster an unhealthy form of dependency, spiritually and interpersonally, by focusing on themes of submission, loyalty, and obedience to those in authority....Leaders who practice spiritual abuse exceed the bounds of legitimate authority and ‘lord it over the flock,’ often intruding into the personal lives of the members. God’s will is something they determine for you rather than something you individually seek to know....Power that elevates a leader beyond contradiction...will lead both the leader and the followers down a road marked by broken relationships, exploitation, and control. Power that tempers and checks itself and is wrapped in compassion is the pathway to gentleness, caring, and maturity. Jesus said, ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’ (John 10:11). He is our model of service and leadership.” --from *Churches That Abuse* by Ron Enroth.

What should our response be to groups that hold false beliefs concerning the fundamentals of the faith, or to groups that have serious errors in their practice? William MacDonald’s following comment is applicable:

“The Word of God is mercilessly uncompromising in its insistence that believers should withdraw themselves from every form of evil--whether ecclesiastical, doctrinal, or moral...(2 Cor. 6:14-18). It is vain to argue that a Christian should remain within a corrupt church in order to be a voice for God in it....To all who argue for a continuance in a church position which they know to be wrong, Samuel furnishes a pointed and powerful reply--‘To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.’”

--William MacDonald