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Driscoll and Breshears team up again to teach thirteen key elements of the Christian faith that should be held by anyone claiming to be a follower of Jesus.

Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe Details

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Adam says

I read through this together with a few other guys, one chapter a week, as a way of introducing them to reading theology. We then met up each week to discuss. It worked really well in this format and I know all the guys benefited from the discipline of reading and talking about theological concepts, particularly soteriology, eschatology and the Church. The book is an excellent tool to be used as an introduction to theology and it certainly stimulated great discussion and prayer for us. In fact the guys enjoyed it so much they have signed up to do another book (Desiring God by Piper)!

Kurt says

Potential readers should know off the bat that this book is not really designed to be casually leafed through from the first page to the last. It is a dense black brick with indie rocker artwork and a million footnotes. Which is great in a lot of ways, but it's a disappointment if you're not expecting it. I bought this book because I listened to the original podcasts and really enjoyed them. They were engaging and amusing and thoroughly Biblical. This book retains the last characteristic but basically abandons the humor that typically characterizes a Driscoll communication. As written, this work is more useful as a reference text, with overwhelmingly thorough citations to Scripture and well-reasoned argumentation. Chapters are clearly delineated, so it will be easy for a reader to find a few handy verses to answer, say, an argument that Jesus is not God or that Mary was not a virgin when Jesus was incarnated. I am happy to have this book on my shelf, and I am happy to have read it all the way through so I will know what is available when I need it, but I don't recommend this book for someone who is just looking to borrow a book to answer a few questions about who God is.

Ashley Bogner says

I read this for one of my classes!

Amelia Sorenson-Abbott says

I think I had way too high of expectations for this book. I love Mark Driscoll's sermons but I didn't really feel that same passion in his book. Very long, very dense. Took me longer then it should have to finish, (my indicator I wasn't completely into it). Had some solid doctrine and thoughts but I disagreed with several points and felt a lot of questions I had were glossed over or unanswered. Still going to listen to his preaching, but not sure if I will go for another book.

Jason Cox says

Sadly, most Christians rarely, if ever, put a second's thought into the doctrines of Christianity. Many may even find the title (Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe) to be offensive or controversial. Many, if not most, self-professing Christians may not even know what "doctrines" are or where they stand on the important doctrines that make up the Christian faith. All the more reason that every Christian should read this book (or listen to the audio version). No, not all Christians believe the same thing.

In this title, Mark Driscoll has chosen to go over 13 core Doctrines of Christianity:

1. The Trinity of God
2. Revelation: God Speaks
3. Creation
4. We are made in God's image
5. The Fall (and God's judgement)
6. Covenant: God's Pursuit of us
7. Incarnation of Christ
8. The Crucifixion of Christ
9. Resurrection
10. What exactly is The Church?
11. Worship
12. Stewardship
13. What is the Kingdom of God?

Each of these core doctrines is explained with direct Biblical reference from the perspective of the author. Many of these doctrines are debated differently by different groups and Driscoll devotes some time to discussing views different from his own. But he does clearly define his own view as he believes it and presents it to his church.

The discussions of each topic were fascinating. As a long time Christian (I am 42 as I write this and was saved at 12), I was honestly astounded at how little this content is discussed by Christians. Or at least that has been the case in my life, churches, and friends. That said, I found the book to be challenging and satisfying at the same time. The author doesn't just state "This is what you should believe" and leave it at that. There is explanation and discussion of what is said about it in the Bible. There is also discussion of pitfalls surrounding some of the doctrines and why people may believe things differently.

While the title states "What Christians Should Believe" it may have been even better to have stated "Why Christians Should Believe." If you are a Christian but haven't really put much thought behind some of these topics, this is an excellent resource. Being Christian means putting your faith in the fact that Jesus Christ is the son of God, that he died on the cross in payment for our sins, and that we are all sinners and in need of His saving, healing grace, without which we are doomed to death and hell. Getting that is crucially important. But then we need to take our knowledge further and this book helps explain the foundations of our faith in a way you may never have considered it before.

Clearly, this book is targeted at Christians. However, if you're not a Christian, this book is still a good explanation of the core beliefs of Christianity. So often Christianity is misrepresented in the media and by people who call themselves Christian but who simply aren't. Going to a Christian church doesn't make a person Christian, nor does calling yourself one. It's deeper than that. If you are interested in learning more about it, this is a good resource. Even better would be to visit an active local church that teaches the Bible

and start some discussions. Or read the Bible yourself. But honestly, this book isn't an impassioned presentation intended to "convert" you.

I should mention this book is not "preachy" at all. It is very straightforward "teaching." Some people might consider it very "dry." I felt that it was quite dry at first, but as I kept reading, it was just so interesting, it ended up reading fairly quickly.

Graham Heslop says

Driscoll and Breshears attempt to do a lot in such a small space: simplifying swathes of systematic theology into digestible portions; showing how Christian theology touches massively on Christian living; and studying the historical context and present cultural setting of their Evangelical Reformed tradition. I think they achieve that for the most part in what is an accessible and rewardingly rich introduction to systematic theology.

Byron says

Reading for Doctrine Series at CBC

Travis Wentworth says

No-nonsense and specific language used here to describe the outline of the Bible.

Kristi says

There were some topics in here that didn't seem to belong in a book on doctrine. In addition, it seems there was a glaring omission of failing to define what doctrine really means, how the topics covered in each chapter constitute doctrine, and how doctrine differs from, say, theology. There were certainly some good insights in these pages, but certainly also sections tainted by opinion. There was also a lot of content in here which I've seen expressed in other works by other authors who, frankly, express it better than the authors did here. I did appreciate the distinction throughout of "open-handed" and "close-handed" issues where the Bible leaves room for multiple interpretations upon which salvation does not rest.

So, not bad, but not great.

Nathan Mckinney says

Not the first book on doctrine that I would recommend. It was a worthwhile read as it encouraged me to dwell upon a variety of biblical and theological topics that I hadn't put thought to in a while. Know that this really is just a run-through of what the now defunct Mars Hill church believes, with the range of issues

touched on reaching very broad. Given the title ("what Christians should believe") I thought several topics probably should have been left out. Or they could have changed the title to "what we believe". That being said, they did do a good job of delineating between "close-handed" and "open-handed issues".

Joseph says

It's a useful resource. It reads well, and is generally a good representation of evangelical theology.

Like most systematic theology books, there's bound to be something one disagrees with.

Every once in a while, a statement pops up that will leave you scratching your head. For example, when discussing the cross, he argues that God reconciles all people to Himself, but not in a saving way. But, how can you say that someone who is eternally condemned is in any way reconciled to God?

Like any systematic theology, they can't always go as in depth as you would like. At times, controversial statements are made without much explanation (except for a few scripture references in the footnotes, which don't always do the trick).

Overall, it has its shortcomings, but it also has some useful insights, and is generally true to the Bible. It's useful.

Victoria says

What a very educational and informative and VERY well researched book! It seems to cover all the really important Biblical subjects such as creation, the trinity, Jesus' death and resurrection, stewardship, hell, etc. I especially have enjoyed watching Mark Driscoll's Doctrine messages that go in line with each chapter to learn things that aren't included in the book. This was a book that people who want to learn more about their faith can deepen their understanding of things which is great for when you get into discussions with non-believer friends or friends who seems to follow false doctrines that don't go in line with the Bible. Also if you are not a believer of Christ, it helps you understand the history and beliefs of Christians. I loved it. There were some chapters I really enjoyed more than others, but overall it was a great read!

Brad Atchison says

Doctrine is one of those books that is quite good at trying to blend systematic theology, biblical theology and the application of it while still containing a few unusual quirks. Driscoll's and Breshears's goal is to present a basic evangelical doctrine in which believers may understand their beliefs and worship the Lord that much more. The Book is divided into thirteen chapters:

- Chapter 1. Trinity: God Is
- Chapter 2. Revelation: God Speaks
- Chapter 3. Creation: God Makes
- Chapter 4. Image: God Loves
- Chapter 5. Fall: God Judges

Chapter 6. Covenant: God Pursues
Chapter 7. Incarnation: God Comes
Chapter 8. Cross: God Dies
Chapter 9. Resurrection: God Saves
Chapter 10. Church: God Sends
Chapter 11. Worship: God Transforms
Chapter 12. Stewardship: God Gives
Chapter 13. Kingdom: God Reigns

Each chapter blends systematic questions along with using biblical theology to prove their points. In my personal opinion, his chapters on Worship and Kingdom were the best chapters.

The chapter on Worship really addresses issues in practical theology. For instance, these two addresses idolatry and the different types that appear in our lives. They argue that worship is a fundamental part of our life. Driscoll and Breshears do well in not limiting worship to a cooperate event that happens once a week but as offering our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2), which includes corporate worship. Also, this team does a great job of relating regeneration with worship and how that worship will culminate with the full consummation of God's Kingdom.

The chapter on the Kingdom of God is also very enlightening. Driscoll and Breshears do a great job at defining the kingdom of God. Here is Driscoll's definition, "The kingdom of God is about Jesus our king establishing his rule and reign over all creation, defeating the human and angelic evil powers, bringing order to all, enacting justice, and being worshiped as Lord." Driscoll also does an amazing job in giving the entire storyline of the Bible in about a page and a half.

I have one or two concerns with this book. The first is concern Driscoll and Breshears apparently do not like the historical language of "eternally begotten" and believes it mars the Nicene Creed, along with the procession of the Spirit from the Father and Son. They also are seemly against trying to say much about the eternal relationship between the three persons (The ontological/immanent Trinity) and want to only speak of how they work in creation (the Economic Trinity).

This all seems a little concerning to me. First, the Nicene Creed does a good job at distinguishing that Jesus was not made/birthed/etc. but "Begotten". Chalcedon fleshes this out more. Also, it is worth keeping this term because it distinguishes Christ from the rest of us children. Christ is the eternal son, while we are not. I think John 14:28 and the form of John 5:26 fleshes this idea out. Also, though the Economic and Immanent Trinity can be distinguished, they cannot be divorced. We see by the acts that each person does how they interact with each other. John clearly records this in John 17 and speaks of the Spirits procession from John 15:26-27. It just seems odd to turn our back on these categories now when they have been biblically faithful definitions.

My other small issue has to do with his application of the incarnation. His application was for us to be "incarnationally missional". Perhaps it's my hyper protectiveness of the Incarnation, but I don't think it is good to jump to this as application. The word Incarnation should only be used for Christ coming into the world. Also, we should first apply the incarnation as a point of worship rather than just a model to replicate. Christ bound himself to a covenant to descend from his heavenly dwelling and all its glory to bind himself to a fleshly body. He then endured the emotional and physical pain of this life, all to culminate at the Cross. At the Cross, he bound sin to himself so that we could be free of the guilt, shame, and bondage that comes from it. The Incarnation is first something to rejoice and worship at rather than to model. I think Driscoll missed this and it's not a small thing to miss.

However, these are just small issues that do not detract substantially from the book. Overall, I would heartily recommend this book with the provided caveats. It is definitely worth the read so that you can better understand the story of the Lord and his glory.

Matthew says

Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears (Vintage Jesus, Vintage Church, Death by Love) have teamed up on their 4th book together, entitled *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe*. In it, the authors seek “to trace the big theological themes of Scripture along the storylines of the Bible” (p. 9). With this structure, readers are walked through chapters like “Trinity: God Is” and “Creation: God Makes” all the way through “Cross: God Dies” and “Kingdom: God Reigns.” Filled with Scriptural and bibliographical references, Driscoll and Breshears have written basically a popular level systematic theology, one that would be a solid resource in any Christian’s collection of books.

While there was definitely value to reading the book straight through like I did, and it would make a great theological introduction for newer believers to get them familiar with the Bible’s big themes, I think the book will actually function best as a reference for the different topics discussed. While I’m not comparing this to Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* in terms of depth and scope, most people don’t use that text to read straight through. Instead, you go to it when studying certain topics or have specific questions about what the Bible and other Christians say about different areas. This is how I foresee using this book in the future. The vast indexes will come in handy here.

I’m sure there are some out there who will have some difficulty with the book’s subtitle: “What Christians Should Believe.” Our postmodern ethos bristles at claims to have the corner on knowledge of anything, let alone the immutable God of the universe. In reading the book, however, Driscoll and Breshears do a pretty solid job of focusing on areas of vast theological and historical agreement among Christians. When discussing areas where differences exist, the authors’ opinions are made known while presenting other areas fairly. Heresy is called heresy when needed, but the word is used carefully and none within the Orthodox tradition of belief should take offense at the way the doctrines are presented here.

As usual, Driscoll was at his best when discussing the cross of Christ. Much of the content of that chapter appeared to be borrowed from *Death by Love*, which is a fantastic exploration of the different facets of the cross. Driscoll “proclaims” the truths in this chapter rather than just describing them, as the tone slips into in other chapters. The same was true of the final chapter about the Kingdom. The information in the book is solid throughout, but you can almost feel the joy in the proclamation in these chapters.

Overall, I would definitely recommend this book as a welcomed addition to any Christian’s library. Not everyone will agree with where the authors’ come down on every topic, but their cases are biblical and summarize the general consensus of traditional, orthodox beliefs in most cases. *Doctrine* is a very solid, popular-level theological reference to have around.

Alex says

Not being a Driscoll fan, I was surprised how much I enjoyed and agreed with this book. It is very hard to

review an audio-book in depth as you don't have a ready reference to which to turn. This book in particular, which is very dense, follows an almost catechetical format, and would be at home in the class-room, took some getting used to in the audio-format. The narration also took some getting used to, something about the inflection in the narrator's voice, I think. However, it was clear and helped understanding. I would recommend reading a text version of *Doctrine*, but be prepared for some time and work, it's taken me months to get through the audio book (listening in the car when alone).

As the title suggests, *Doctrine* covers major Christian beliefs such as creation, the Bible, sin and judgment (and others, about 13 in all). In some ways it is a reiteration of classic Reformed Evangelical teaching, but adds a contemporary and accessible flavour through the application and illustrations. It is thoroughly biblical, weighing and critiquing alternative views and then often arguing for one based on how they see the evidence. In this way the approach and conclusions are conservative and biblical. The authors affirm 6 day special creation, for example, the eternal conscious punishment of the unrepentant, and the complementarian view of women in ministry.

Having said I agree with a lot, I don't agree everything, but only over what I consider secondary matters, and they certainly are very orthodox. In cases of disagreement, their presentation of the alternatives helped me locate and think through my own views on the spectrum. However, there were moments of brilliance, particularly in one of the later chapters dealing with stewardship and consumerism.

I started this book when I was a pastor looking for a resource for young adults to get a grip on basic doctrine. I would recommend it for this purpose, although it would probably be best for group work - both to encourage perseverance in reading, and to flesh out the challenging discussion it contains. But even as a post-graduate trained pastor I found it worthwhile and even, in places, refreshing.

3 stars (subjectively on the Good Reads scale, maybe 4 stars if one considers its value) - I like it, but it is hard work and doesn't fit the audio format so well (although if it's the difference between reading and not reading, get it on audio!).
