

# Session 1: Living Out What You Believe

*Series: The Christian Life: Living Under Grace / Dr. Randy White*

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## I. Christian Living Rises or Falls on Sound Doctrine

### A. Doctrine inevitably produces ethics.

1. Christian living is not produced by emotion, atmosphere, or personality; it is produced by what a person believes to be true about God, Scripture, and salvation.
  1. Sometimes we don't think through what we believe, and so we seem to operate on the level of emotion, atmosphere, or personality.
  2. In reality, all behavior is belief-based - and sometimes our beliefs are so fluid that the emotion, atmosphere, or personality takes over and changes our beliefs too quickly.
  3. 2 Timothy 4:3-4: For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.
2. Every believer already has a theology, whether carefully formed or casually absorbed, and that theology governs moral decisions.
  1. Sometimes we call it theology or doctrine
  2. Sometimes we call it "worldview"
  3. Sometimes we just say "this is what I think..."
3. The bottom line: belief shapes behavior.
  1. Therefore, be careful what beliefs you adopt.
  2. Side note: I think Christianity has harmed itself by pushing for quick decisions to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."
    1. It has become a five-minute presentation with an expected response.
    2. We have inadvertently created a "Christian spirit" that can easily be persuaded.
      1. We did this either by displaying a "five minutes that will change your life" evangelism style,
      2. Or by using a "five minutes that will change your life" approach that only attracted people with little-to-no conviction in their belief system.
    3. The christian faith requires thought, logic, the engagement of the mind.
      1. A faith-commitment doesn't have to be "quick, right now!!", nor should it be.

2. Take for example the reaction to Paul's sermon at Mar's Hill, Acts 17:32-34. Where instead of an immediate belief some said "We will hear thee again" eventually following Paul and believing.

## **B. The Church Has Gradually Shifted from Doctrinal Precision to Experiential Emphasis**

### **1. Within living memory, doctrinal clarity was treated as essential to Christian faithfulness.**

1. The modernist–fundamentalist controversy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not a quarrel over style but over doctrine.
  1. The authority and inerrancy of Scripture were openly contested.
  2. The virgin birth, bodily resurrection, and substitutionary atonement were defended as non-negotiable truths.
  3. Churches divided because doctrine was believed to determine whether Christianity itself remained intact.
2. Doctrinal positions were once carefully studied and publicly affirmed.
  1. Churches expected pastors to articulate precise positions on inspiration, salvation, the Church, and last things.
  2. Ordination councils often examined candidates rigorously in theology before recognizing them for ministry.
3. Many congregations once maintained structured doctrinal training.
  1. Training Union, catechism classes, Sunday evening doctrinal studies, and midweek theology lessons were common.
  2. Church members were expected to understand not only what they believed, but why they believed it.

3. Children and adults alike were systematically instructed in theology, not merely encouraged in devotional sentiment.

In these contexts, doctrine was not considered divisive in a negative sense; it was considered part of the Christian experience.

### **2. In much of the contemporary church, doctrinal clarity has been displaced by experiential emphasis.**

1. Churches now frequently promote community, authenticity, atmosphere, and relevance before they mention doctrinal commitments.
2. The phrase "doctrine divides" is often treated as a warning, while "experience unites" is treated as wisdom.
3. Preaching in many places has shifted from theological exposition to therapeutic encouragement or motivational application.
4. Disagreement over doctrine is frequently viewed as uncharitable, while shared experience is treated as sufficient ground for unity.

### **3. The result is a weakening of doctrinal literacy and moral stability.**

1. Confusion about foundational truths has increased, even among regular church attenders.
2. When doctrinal foundations erode, ethical reasoning tends to follow cultural sentiment rather than revealed truth.

## **C. Only sound doctrine can sustain a consistent Christian ethic.**

1. Feelings fluctuate, but revealed truth does not.
2. Cultural consensus changes, but the character of God does not.
3. Christian living is not a second step after doctrine; it is the natural and unavoidable outworking of it.

4. Titus 2:1, Paul tells Titus to speak sound doctrine, then he lists the positive results of sound doctrine in the church through verses 2-6

## II. Right Division Determines Whether Doctrine Is Sound or Confused

### A. Sound doctrine requires knowing where to derive it.

1. A believer must know which revelation governs the Body of Christ in the present dispensation.
2. Without jurisdictional clarity, ethical confusion is unavoidable.

### B. Mixing Moses and Paul produces instability.

1. Blending Israel's covenantal instructions with Pauline revelation introduces contradictory expectations.
  1. Sermons that apply the Sermon on the Mount as direct church law create a quiet tension with Pauline teaching on grace and liberty.
    1. Absolute non-resistance, communal economic expectations, and kingdom-level righteousness are imposed without regard to dispensational context.
    2. The result is either unrealistic idealism or selective obedience.
  2. The use of Deuteronomic covenant formulas—"If you obey, you will be blessed; if you disobey, you will be cursed"—is frequently applied to Christian life and national politics.
    1. This creates a transactional view of God's dealings with believers.
    2. It subtly reintroduces conditional covenant thinking into a grace framework.
  3. Appeals to Israel's civil code as a template for modern governmental structure confuse

the role of a theocratic nation with the calling of a heavenly Body.

2. Law passages imposed upon those under grace produce either legalism or quiet hypocrisy.
  1. Sabbath legislation is sometimes reintroduced in softened form, creating moral pressure without covenant clarity.
    1. Believers are told they are not "under the law," yet are evaluated by standards derived from it.
    2. This fosters either compliance-driven spirituality or silent disregard.
  2. Old Testament dietary or ceremonial principles are reframed as spiritual disciplines, blurring the line between illustration and obligation.
  3. Kingdom-era warnings of judgment are often directed toward the Body of Christ as though our standing were covenantally conditional.
3. Kingdom promises imported into the present dispensation distort motivation and expectation.
  1. Parables concerning stewardship, outer darkness, or exclusion from kingdom participation are often used to construct reward-loss frameworks for the Church.
    1. This shifts Christian service from gratitude to anxiety.
    2. It subtly introduces performance-based motivation into grace living.
  2. Promises tied to Israel's earthly restoration are spiritualized into present Christian entitlement.
  3. The language of reigning, inheritance, and kingdom administration is detached from its prophetic setting and made the controlling incentive for Christian obedience.

4. The cumulative effect of dispensational confusion is ethical instability.

1. Believers are told they are free from law, yet evaluated by it.
2. They are assured of grace, yet warned with kingdom-era threats.
3. They are declared complete in Christ, yet urged to earn standing through reward-driven effort.

**C. There may be nothing more dangerous than mislocated doctrine.**

1. “Go with your gut” Christianity may actually produce better results than “Go with mixed up Moses and Paul” Christianity.

1. A mixed up doctrine produces legalism, heartache, rejection of faith, superior-attitudes, and more.
  2. A “gut level” at least recognizes that a person is made in God’s image and has some of the sense of goodness and morality within them.
2. Right division protects Scripture’s authority by allowing each passage to stand in its proper context.

### **III. Grace Does Not Remove Moral Order; It Requires Method**

**A. There is an objective moral order rooted in God’s character (Romans 6:1-2)**

1. Being “under grace” does not eliminate moral structure.
2. The character of God remains the ultimate standard of right and wrong.

**B. Living under grace requires disciplined thinking.**

1. Grace removes jurisdictional law, but it does not remove responsibility.
2. Freedom under grace demands greater theological clarity, not less.
3. A believer who knows how to find moral instruction in Scripture will not be enslaved to emotionalism, institutional rulebooks, or cultural trends.