

Finding the Right Hill to Die On

A look at Gavin Ortlund's book on theological triage

Ortlund provides us with a four-category framework for ranking theological issues:

1. _____ doctrines to the gospel
2. _____ doctrines for the health and practice of the church such that they frequently cause Christians to separate at the level of local church, denomination, and/or ministry
3. _____ doctrines, but not enough to justify separation or division in the body of Christ
4. _____ issues to both our gospel witness and ministry collaboration

Chapter 2-The Danger of Doctrinal Minimalism

Christianity requires balance. Many times people can _____ to an error and go to the extreme opposite error. In response to the attitude where everything is worthy of fighting over, many people have responded with an attitude that says, "nothing should be fought over."

However, in reality "doctrinal division cannot be avoided. Believe anything, and you are disbelieving its opposite and therefore dividing, in some sense, from those who don't share your belief."

Do Nonessential doctrines matter? _____. All doctrines are important.

1. **Nonessential doctrines are significant to _____** - If it is contained in Scripture then the Lord thought it was important for us to know. If we do not understand this, we can start to devalue certain portions of Scripture that we think are the "not important parts."

"One consequence of downplaying the importance of nonessential doctrines is, however inadvertently, downplaying Scripture itself."

"Everything God reveals in Scripture is essential for something, or it wouldn't be there. 'Nonessential for salvation' does not mean of no importance at all."

"A casual, take-it-or-leave-it attitude about theology is totally incompatible with how we are to receive the word of God. Its contents may call for trembling and tearing of clothes, but never shrugging."

A growing _____ of God's Word (all His Word) is a clear mark of a maturing believer.

"Our love for the Lord who breathed it to us-and our reverence for it as His breathed word-should compel diligent study and effort to understand it as much as we can."

2. **Nonessential doctrines are significant to _____** - The testimony of the willingness of so many saints throughout the history of the church to suffer for "nonessential" doctrines should motivate us to take such doctrines seriously.

"Bearing in mind the sacrifices of the past helps us remember that. It is difficult to countenance the charred flesh of Latimer and Ridley, for instance, and then remain indifferent to the disputes about the Lord's Supper that led to their circumstance. Of course, we may not always agree with exactly how Christians of previous eras have taken a stand. But we need not consider them infallible in order to

appreciate and learn from their example. We can and should be sobered by the courage, carefulness, and conviction with which our predecessors in the faith pursued theological integrity, even on various nonessential doctrines.”

3. Nonessential doctrines are significant to the _____ -Many doctrines are not essential to the gospel but are very important to how you live out your faith.

How you understand the teachings of the Bible will _____ your life and the life of those around you. Understanding this makes us realize that our view of nonessential doctrines is in-fact very important. It would be a great error to not understand this.

It is a _____ error to view non-essential doctrines as unimportant than it is to have the wrong view on non-essential items.

Quoting Machen we read, “Luther was wrong about the Supper, but not nearly so wrong as he would have been if, being wrong, he had said to his opponents, ‘Brethren, this matter is a trifle; and it makes really very little difference what a man thinks about the table of the Lord.’ Such indifferentism would have been far more deadly than all the divisions between the branches of the Church. A Luther who would have compromised with regard to the Lord’s Supper never would have said at the Diet of Worms, ‘Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me, Amen.’ Indifferentism about doctrine makes no heroes of the faith.”

4. Nonessential doctrines are significant to _____ doctrines- All doctrines are connected in some sense. Therefore, to think that one can simply ignore or trivialize nonessential doctrines will eventually lead to a crumbling away of essential doctrines.

Some doctrines _____ the gospel-Such as marriage-therefore they are important for a proper understanding of the gospel

Some doctrines _____ the gospel- Such as a high view of Scripture-to disbelief in the infallibility of Scripture will not necessarily damn you but it will lead to great trouble down the road.

Some doctrines _____ to the gospel- Such as ones view of the role of tradition- to elevate tradition to a level of authority will eventually impact ones understanding of the gospel.

There is a time to _____ over doctrine- the call for unity can never be at the abandonment of _____. Some doctrines are worthy of fighting for.

“Theology is done coram Deo (before the face of God). The glory of God and the good of the church are at stake. Nothing but our deepest sincerity and diligence is sufficient for this undertaking. It will take all the courage we have.”