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Why We Believe What We Believe – Bible Part 2

[Easley:] “We need right now a return to a gentle dogmatism that smiles while it stands stubborn and firm on the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.”

[Lepine:] This in *inContext* with Michael Easley, I’m Bob Lepine. I love that quote. That’s Tozer, right?

[Easley:] Wonderful. Yeah. Yeah.

[Lepine:] And a few years ago, I remember Joshua Harris, who pastors Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg adopt it as a theme for a conference he was doing. The idea of humble orthodoxy, which is really the same kind of idea. We have to stand firm but we have to stand firm with grace and truth.

[Easley:] Yeah.

[Lepine:] Jesus was full of grace and truth and if you err on either side, you’re erring, right?

[Easley:] Right. Right. Well, and we’ve come out of a time, King James only pounding the pulpit dogmatism and I think the gentle dogmatism in this cultural context is critical; that we don’t argue and become strident and vitriolic, that we’re patient and gentle if we want to reach people with this information.

[Lepine:] Mm hmm. Paul talks about speaking the truth how? In love. And that’s how we’re supposed to do it as we engage people in the culture. And of course the reason we’re talking about how we approach issues like this is because we’re in a series on why we believe what we believe and when you do stand for doctrinal truth, there will be people who will challenge you. This particular message has to do with the doctrine of Scripture, which is where you must begin when you’re going to talk about any kind of a doctrinal foundation. You have to agree on the rule book that this is your source of authority. Otherwise, the argument goes in all kinds of directions and you can’t get on the same page.

[Easley:] Interestingly, the Bible still is the number one sold book in America. It outsells any other book ever published on any publishing cycle. Publishers’ bestseller lists pulled it off years ago because of obvious reasons. But, the Scripture, it’s a living document in that it is the Word of God that is God-breathed but it meets us where we are.

And while that is also a cliché, Bob, this morning when I opened the Scripture and had my devotions in Psalm eighteen, I saw things I had never seen before.

[Lepine:] Hmm.

[Easley:] And how many times have I read through the Bible? I can’t even count. So, the living organism, the Word of God that He is speaking. Dr. Howard Hendricks, one of my great friends and professors often said, “This is not what God would say if He was here, it is what He is saying because He is here.”

[Lepine:] Well, let's listen to what God is saying as we look together at what the Scriptures say about the doctrine of the Bible. Here's Michael.

[Easley:] I went to get a haircut a couple of weeks ago, my normal barber was closed and I went to a place I'd never been before. That was a mistake. I sat down in this chair, this young girl started cutting my hair and the first thing she said to me, it was kind of one word, she said, 'What'd you do this weekend?'

Strange question. I thought, "Well, what'd I do this weekend?"

"I worked in my yard, I took my family to church on Sunday and I went out to lunch," I said.

I said, "What'd you do this weekend?"

And she began to tell me about how she went clubbing in downtown Chicago. Lives out in the west suburbs and how she went to all these clubs and she drank too much and got drunk and on she went and I said, "What's your favorite club?" [laughter]

[laughter] And she said, "The Crow Bar." She said, "Ever been there?"

I said, "No, can't say that I have." [laughter]

And on this conversation went and as these things go she said, "Well, what do you do?"

[laughter] I said, "I work for the Moody Bible Institute."

And she said, "Really? I have some friends that went to Moody."

I said, "Really?"

And she goes, "Yeah, I want to go to Moody."

I said, "Really?" [laughter]

And on this conversation went. And we went back talking about clubs and about drinking too much and on and on we went and at the end of this conversation I left with a very bad haircut but with a twelve dollar illustration that is so powerful, men and women. I don't know how to reach her, but you do and I mean that. I don't know how to do this anymore. Because I believe that truth and authority go hand in hand and ergo, if it's truthful and authoritative, we should believe it and live that way and if you think that way you're a dinosaur. And that's the culture that you're going to work in, in ministry, and are now ministering in and trying to reach and help and impact. They don't get it because of all these "isms" and "ologies" that have erased these thinkings, these thoughts, these processes.

Why you believe what you believe is crucial.

If you have a Bible, flip over to Second Timothy three for a moment. Second Timothy three, first seven verses I'd like to read. Second Timothy three beginning at verse one:

. . . realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Each one of those words could be an entire series of messages in our culture. You could have written that on August 28, 2006 to describe our culture, could we not? The relevancy of these things is as real today as it was when God had Paul scratch them on parchment. If you are not grounded in this book, you will always list. As I said recently, if you are not in this book every day why are you here? I had a lot of conversations with people post that remark. And I will say it again, if you are not in this book every day, why are you here?

If you are a faculty, staff, student, you ought to be in it every day. Not because you have to, because you get to. Not because you should check a box but because you want to know the very mind of your God that you portend to believe and follow. If you don't need it every day, what you're really saying is, "I'm smarter than He is and I can rest on what I studied and I don't really have time for it because I'm too busy and I'm too important and you don't know my schedule."

And the God of the universe must crease a smile. You really think you can do this without Me? I can track my own stress level and my own frustration level in life. The more intimately I walk with my Savior, the less stressed out I am in the crucible of life. The more stressed out I am, the more frenetic I am, the more disconnected I am, the more upset I get, the quicker my temper, the less intimate I am with Jesus Christ. Maybe you're different than me. Maybe you're super spiritual. I'm just a sinner, saved by grace trying to hammer it out.

After his Green Bay Packers were trounced 73-0 by the Chicago Bears [cheers and applause], Vince Lombardi showed up Monday morning with his team and he took a leather, oval object and held it up and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football."

And the legendary Lombardi speech took them to two Super Bowl victories. Lombardi basically said, "We must go back to the basics. We must go back to the first down, to the tackle. Forget the scoreboard. Forget the winning right now."

“We want to win,” he was very clear about winning, “but in order to win, you’ve got to execute. You’ve got to catch the ball, you’ve got to tackle. You’ve got to be defensive. You’ve got to make a first down. Gentlemen, this is a football.”

Men and women, this is the very Word of God. How can we do this thing called ministry apart from the very Word of God? We are Moody Bible Institute. Tattoo it on your forehead backwards. And when you put your makeup on in the morning or shave your mug, you’ll see the word “Bible.” [laughter]

The Hebrews took it literally and they put phylacteries on their forehead and on their wrist and Mezuzah on their door. And He said, “No, keep the Word of God in your mind. Keep it in your hand when you work, when you go in and come out. Keep the Word of God in your goings and comings, ups and downs, ins and outs, lying down, getting up. All of life you must have a Biblical theology. Your God is one.”

It’s a football. Why you believe what you believe must season every pore of your being. It cannot be perfunctory, it cannot be secondary, it can’t be, “Oh, by the way, I read the Bible once.” Good friend of mine who’s a pastor says, “I haven’t read the Bible, but I’ve colored most of the pages.” It needs to be part of who we are, not as Moody, but as believers in Christ.

Well, the shift in doctrines as we’ve watched liberalism take over has not been a tsunami, it’s not been a terrorist attack, it’s not been a frontal assault. I think, science professors can correct me, I think the theological structures are like tectonic plates that over time and heat and pressure and erosion have shifted and buckled. If you’ve studied hogbacks, you can come to your own conclusion, these ridges in the desert that seem to be there for no apparent reason. Scientists theorize that those huge tectonic plates are pushing against each other and finally a weak point pops up and they call it a ridgeback or a hogback in the middle of nowhere.

That to me is false doctrine in the landscape of evangelical theology. It pushes, it pushes, it pushes, it changes our thinking, we speak the language of the culture and the day thinking we’re so erudite and before long we have been hoodwinked into believing something we never thought we should believe. And someone like me comes along and says something like this you go, “Oh, you’re such a dinosaur.”

The word doctrine comes from Latin *doctrina* where we get the word doctor that many of your professors boast in the front of their name. “I’m Doctor So-and-so.” Doctor means a collection of literature, a collection of teachings and so we use the word “doctrinal statement.” I would encourage you in the weeks ahead to print out a copy or bring your undergraduate catalogue to chapel. I would also challenge you to read pages fifteen to twenty once-in-a-while.

I’ve been studying this all summer long, I was just talking to Dr. Dyer about it over this weekend and even this morning. This is a great document. It’s full of tremendous assumptions and, if I may, this is a football. We must come back to why we believe what we believe before we know what we’re going to do, okay?

Now, when I use the word teaching and authority, let me just give you a quick commercial break. We’re almost done, you’ll be fine, hang in there. When we talk about

teaching and authority, in the New Testament particularly, when we hear these terms, we kind of raise our hackles. Nobody like authority today, nobody likes truth today. I was reading about inerrancy the last few weeks and several what I call single-volume handbooks of theology I have, I have Ryrie and Barackman and Ends and Elwell and certain ones that I like to go to and I enjoy what they write. I read a little bit of Henry and others and I just like to see what do they say about inerrancy?

I was reading some journal abstracts online this weekend from like JETs and different ones talking about inerrancy and the debate of all the terms and all these things and the one thing that struck me again and again was the presupposition is that we think there is a truth and we think that because it's truth we should solute. And I would say, most, not all, most in this room are fine with that.

"Yeah. If it's the truth of God's Word, I'm going to do it."

There are some in here that resist that, they arch their back to it, and this is systemic in our culture, men and women. Just because it's a truth does not mean a person's going to say, "Oh, okay. I believe."

Truth has become relativized. Hegel was the first German philosopher that said the concept of there are existing truths we can't reconcile; I've shared it before, envision it like a sphere. Your truth is over here, mine's over there. They coexist. What's true for you is true, what's true for me is true, even though we can't reconcile it because truth is just too big to reconcile. Bologna!

But this type of thinking has seasoned the academic, has seasoned the author, has seasoned the culture and that's where relativism comes in.

"That's truth for you? That's fine."

And we talk about spirituality today, that's what it's all about; what's spiritual for you is fine, what's spiritual for me is fine. Why can't we all just get along and be inclusive? And tolerant? And go back to kindergarten and hold hands and have milk and cookies? Because if the Word of God is true, all else is false. If God has spoken and His Son Jesus Christ as the revealed *logos* Word of God, you cannot say, "I believe in Jesus and it's okay for you to believe what you believe."

It's paganism, men and women. That's idolatry, men and women. That's syncretism, men and women. And this culture is going to push you and push you and push you and push you whether you're an academic, a practitioner, a student, a grad student, a faculty, a staff, or just a friend listening. Don't let the world teach you theology. It's got to be rooted and grounded in the Word of God. Jesus says in Mark 7:7, look at it, turn there. It's where the word doctrine pops up in your New Testament several times. Mark 7:7:

*BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,[Jesus says]
BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'*

Jesus says, "If you worship Me in your own way, in your own truth, it's vain because you have taken the doctrines, the collection of ideas of man, and used those to come to me

and Jesus won't have anything to do with it. In vain, emptiness, no meaning, do they worship me."

Teaching as doctrines, the idea is the thoughts of men. Doctrine in our Greek New Testament is from *didasko*, *didaskalia*, *didaskalos*, the idea of didactic teaching, line by line we think of it. That's really not a fair definition. Didactic or *didaskalia* is a collection of truth. It's the *logos* in a way, it's the content, it this corpus of belief that we say it's true, therefore it's authoritative; therefore we must obey. Why you believe what you believe is crucial and it must be grounded in truth.

Last passage I want you to turn to is in Mark chapter one, back a few pages. Jesus Christ's teaching is different than man's teaching. Jesus says in Mark chapter one verse twenty-one, twenty-two, I'll read:

They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach.

They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Now, there's a little bit of spade work you have to do here, but as I understand it, the Rabbinic teaching largely was like case study. You've been to law school, some of you, or know someone in law school, you don't just stand up and say, "Your honor, I think it should be this way."

That's foolish. You must cite case law. Other cases that have been tried and found a certain way, a court found something this way and so you say, "Well, in this case what the judge and jury found was X, therefore we apply this case to the current case."

You with me? The Rabbinics were not too different. They quoted other Rabbis. A Rabbi was known as brilliant and a scholar if he could handle lots, we might say quote a lot of commentaries. And if he could cite and source a lot of other Rabbis, then he was a scholar because you don't come up and say, "Well, I think this passage means –"

That would be hubris and arrogance and they'd mock you. That's why the lawyer concept fits well with the Scribe and Pharisee, right? Because they knew the law, they could cite cases, if you will. Jesus stands up and he just teaches; because God, the God-man, can speak with authority unlike anyone else. So fast forward: when you go somewhere and you hold this book and you're not talking about post-modernity and relativism and secularism and humanism and pan-modernity; you're talking about God and what He has said and what He has spoken. And I hope you will come to know that it's truth not just academically or intellectually or make a decision; but as you know the Word of life and the very Author of your life and the very Savior of your soul, that you'll submit yourself more and more to him and less and less to yourself and say, "You know what, I'm wrong."

And humbly come before the very Word of God. Tozer wrote, "Moral power has always been accompanied with definitive belief." Listen again, "Moral power has always been accompanied with definitive belief. Great saints have always been dogmatic. We need right now a return to a gentle dogmatism [Isn't that great?] a gentle dogmatism that

smiles while it stands stubborn and firm on the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.”

May you have a gentle dogmatism about the very Word of God because why you believe what you believe is not important, it is crucial to what you will do.

[Lepine:] Michael, I like the fact that as you took us through this message, you stressed the authority of Scripture. I remember somebody talking one time about the issues of infallibility and inerrancy and they were saying it's important that we understand the truth, the veracity that Scripture is true, but beyond that we have to say it's not just true, it's authoritative. It holds sway over my life -

[Easley:] Mm hmm.

[Lepine:] Because you can affirm the truth of something and say, “That's true, it's just not anything I'm going to pay any attention to.”

[Easley:] Well, and that's where our culture is. The most frustrating is, “Well, that's true for you, Bob.”

[Lepine:] Right.

[Easley:] Well, no, if it's true, it's true. When Christ says to look on a woman with lust is to commit adultery in your heart. The question becomes, is that an authoritative word that I say, “If I look at that woman twice, if I look at her with the wrong intention, if I look at her in the wrong way, I'm sinning.”

[Lepine:] Mm hmm.

[Easley:] That is not a negotiable, that's not true for you or for me, it's not looking at the menu, but not eating the food we're not supposed to. And, again, in a culture that is so flattened in what truth is, to hold up the Bible and say, “This is the very Word of God,” that's pretty crazy in the culture we live in.

[Lepine:] And we need to be aware there are the obvious challenges to the authority of Scripture that come from outside of the church from those who are not followers of Christ and who challenge the text. But more and more we're seeing folks inside the church who are wondering aloud, “Well, is this really what the Bible means?” or “Can we really trust the Bible?” And there are just those subtle attacks on the veracity, on the authority of Scripture, on the reliability of God's Word.

And that's an issue that needs to be settled in our own hearts. In fact, one of the things I really appreciate that our team has done is they've taken this sermon series that you've done on “Why We Believe What We Believe” and they've taken the *Moody Handbook of Theology* and they've put them together so that folks can listen to your messages, they can review your sermon notes, which are on the mp3 CD that we send out with the book. And then we point them to different sections of the *Moody Handbook of Theology* and have some questions for them and we define some theological terms along the way. It's really a great study in the foundational doctrines of the faith and I know there are people who are using this material to disciple others, there are people using it in church settings and of course it can be used for personal Bible study as well.

There's more information about the "Why We Believe What We Believe" Bible study on our website, incontextradio.org or you can call for more information at 877-3CONTEXT. And someone on our team can answer any questions you might have or let you know how you can get the "Why We Believe What We Believe" Bible study from us here on *inContext*.

Now, tomorrow we're going to begin looking at why we believe what we believe about the doctrine of the Trinity, which is a challenge to understand, but it's also essential for our understanding. I hope you can join us back tomorrow for that on *inContext* with Michael Easley.