

**Church History**  
**By Steffanie Howard**  
**Week One**

**Day One: Introduction to Church History**

**What is Church History?**

Church history studies the roots and origin of the Christian church. However, the study is not limited to the church itself, but to all influences in history that have impacted the church, and likewise, the movements in history that the church has impacted.

Our study will begin in the Old Testament to provide us with the necessary background to the formation of the New Testament Church around 33 A.D, and will continue on to present day.

**What Will This Course Be Like?**

This class has been prepared with special consideration to Christians of all denominations and without intentional bias to one Christian group over another. Students will be studying church history from the men and women who were present in the different ages of history and recorded it themselves. Students will study the development of all prominent denominations.

As such, students and parents should be aware that some of the reading material will present a worldview that is disagreeable to you. To teach church history in light of all of the historical evidence and to thoroughly understand how the church got its shape, it is necessary for students to read some texts that present a different worldview. Some of the works will be agreeable to all Christians; some will be disagreeable to all Christians. Others were written unfavorably to specific denominations. All of these works will be highlighted and will have a warning beside the referral, stating which groups may be sensitive to the material.

All work may be submitted for grading, but this is not a required component of the course. For those who will be submitting work for grading, there will be two large projects in this class, in addition to regular weekly assignments and occasional short quizzes.

Concluding the study of the Reformation, students will be given the opportunity to offer their theological rebuttals to the historians who wrote the works they read through this period.

A final project at the end of the year will allow students to use their desired medium. Students may choose a visual art, performing art, writing, speech, filmmaking, or any other outlet that he or she enjoys to demonstrate a person, group, or period in history that had the most impact on them through the course.

Regular weekly assignments will involve adding dates to timelines, making maps, reading works from all periods of history, and short answer writing to provoke thought and deeper comprehension while students read.

Prepare to spend about four to six hours a week in church history lessons and assignments. Always feel free to contact me with questions.

### **Why Should Studying Church History Matter To Me?**

There are many great personal reasons for studying church history. Romans teaches us that history is a vital study because the things that were written before our time were written for our learning (Romans 15:4). By studying the history of the church, you will learn about spiritual summits and surmises of Christians through history. Hopefully by learning these lessons through someone else's life, you will avoid the same mistakes and experience the same victories.

Have you ever wondered why we celebrate Christian holidays on the days that we do? Or where the Bible came from? Or who decided what worship should be like? Or what the difference is between the different denominations, and why they split in the first place? Church history provides us with vital answers to why we live, worship, and believe what we do. By having these answers, we are better prepared for the skeptical world, but we are also more personally committed to the truth of the Gospel.

Further, this class will help you understand the impact each person has on the rest of the body of Christ. Hopefully, this will help you to be a more active member in your local church. It should also help to give you a little more direction as you plan and prepare for how you will serve God after graduation.

Overview of upcoming lessons:

- Key doctrines of the Christian faith
- The temple system of the Old Testament and its links to the New Testament Church

**Assignment One:** Prepare a folder or notebook for church history. In it you will make timelines and maps, take notes, store flashcards, and complete weekly assignments. Staying organized will be vital to your success in this class.

### **Day Two: The Non-Negotiable Doctrines of the Church**

As we prepare to look in the Old Testament and survey the origins of Christian doctrine and the church, we need to spend a little bit of time first in theology.

First of all, what is doctrine? *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines doctrine as, "That which is being taught."

Christian doctrines, therefore, are the clear teachings of Scripture.

Some Christian doctrines are necessary for all Christians to hold to; they are the very doctrines that classify us as Christians or unbelievers. They are non-negotiable. These doctrines are called the fundamental or essential doctrines. Other doctrines are specific only to certain denominations. These are non-fundamental doctrines.

How can you tell the difference between which doctrines are fundamental and which are non-fundamental? This is what we are going to learn today.

1. A doctrine is fundamental if salvation depends on it. Which Christian doctrines does the Bible speak of salvation depending on?
  - A. The Triune Godhead and God's character
  - B. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ
  - C. The sinless life of Jesus Christ
  - D. The bodily death of Jesus Christ and its atoning
  - E. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ
  - F. Salvation cannot be earned by good works, but only by faith through grace in Jesus Christ alone.
  - G. The inspiration, infallibility, and authority of the Bible.
  
2. A doctrine is fundamental if the Bible gives a forbidding warning against it not being observed. As you read your Bible, you have probably noted that there are some things that God very clearly demands cannot be avoided or ignored. These are fundamental doctrines; they are necessary for the Christian faith.

Non-fundamental doctrines may discuss issues like church governance, worship music, how God's sovereignty functions with salvation, and other denomination-subjective doctrines.

Teachings by the church that are not supported by Scripture are called extrabiblical or eisegetical. They need more than the Bible to confirm them. These teachings are not doctrinal, because they are not the teachings of the Bible, but many eisegetical teachings are considered significant to some denominations.

In this course, you will be learning about all of these forms of teachings, in addition to pagan and secular terms of thought as well. Unbiblical teachings comprise a significant part of early church history because it is through them that the church developed its doctrine and apologetic.

**Assignment Two:** Using Scripture to support your reasons, describe why each doctrine discussed under the heading, "A doctrine is fundamental if salvation depends on it," is fundamental to the faith. Make flashcards of the definitions that were presented in this lesson.

### **Day Three: Old Testament, Part One**

Though the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith are not seen expressly in the Old Testament, their foundation is present from the first chapter of Genesis. This lesson will explore the fundamental questions of church history and will provide us with the proper background with which to study the Christian church.