

STUDY GUIDE

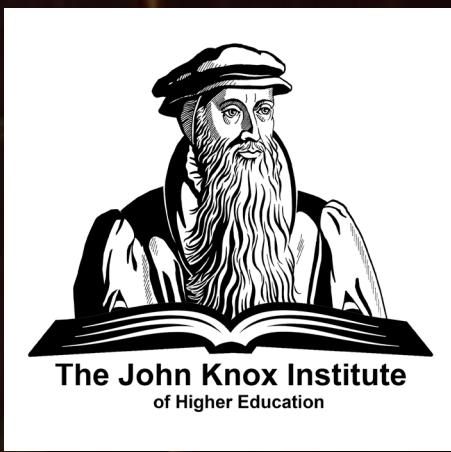
for

Biblical Eldership

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Robert D. McCurley, ThM

Lecture #5
Doctrine



John Knox Institute of Higher Education
Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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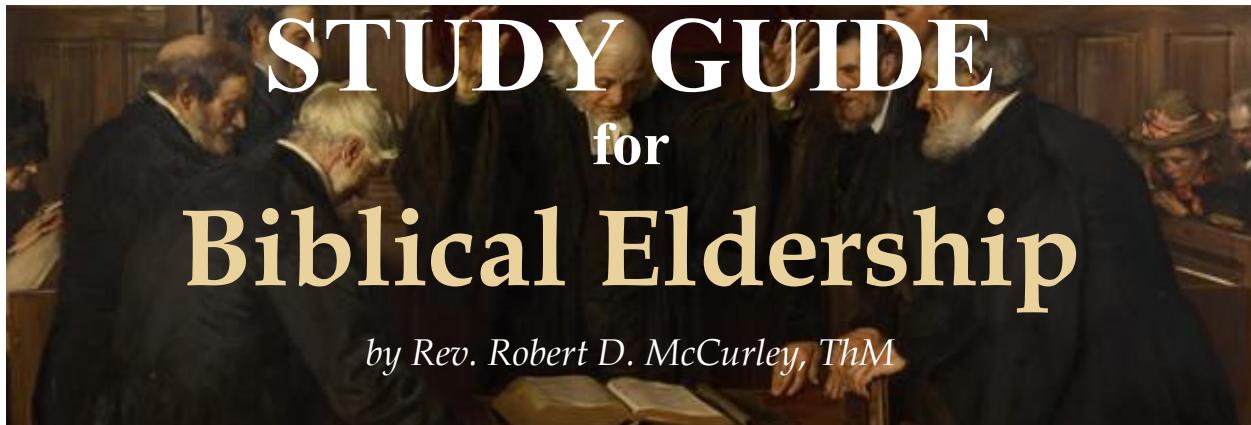
Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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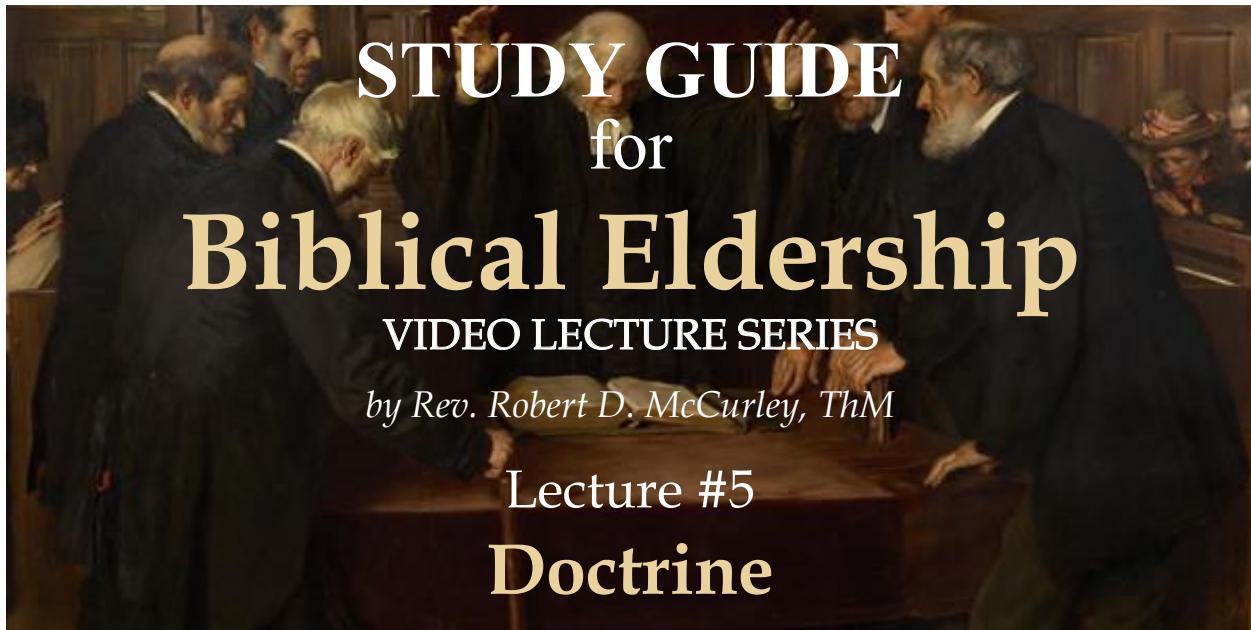
Cover image: “The Ordination of Elders in a Scottish Kirk,” 1891, John Henry Lorimer



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1. Introduction
2. The Office
3. Qualifications
4. More Qualifications
- 5. Doctrine**
6. Shepherding



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Lecture #5

Doctrine

Introduction

In the opening of the book of Revelation, Christ calls his churches “candlesticks,” and tells us that he himself walks among them. He is present in the assembly of his people. The church functions as a light set upon a hill shining amid a dark world. But the light of a church can go out. Christ can remove the lampstand, the candlestick, of which he warns us in Revelation 2 and 3. Places that formerly knew the presence of the Lord can have “Ichabod,” which means, “the Lord has departed,” written over their door. Well, history testifies to this danger. The pressing question is, why does this happen? How do godly churches become places where the gospel and truths of Scripture are no longer believed, loved, and preached? In many cases, the answer is actually quite simple. Men, specifically elders in the church, failed to keep their promises.

Theme

The importance of the Elder’s doctrine—Titus 1, verse 9 to chapter 2, verse 1.

Key Points

1. *Holding Fast to Sound Doctrine.*

- a. The Bible speaks of an elder’s doctrine in connection with their qualifications.
- b. An elder must hold unto the truth with both their head and their heart.
- c. The elder must learn sound doctrine, know sound doctrine, and maintain sound doctrine, in order to be able to teach sound doctrine.

2. *Handling Faithfully Sound Doctrine.*

- a. A twofold exhortation to elders in holding fast the truth:

- 1) He must confirm the truth from the Bible.
- 2) He must be prepared to contradict error, confront it, oppose it, refuse it, and silence false teaching.

b. Doctrine must be joined to exhortation: the practical application of truth to heart and life.

c. Sound doctrine will meet with opposition that involves spiritual warfare:

- 1) Satan, and sins, seducer in the church, and the world outside the church.
- 2) Wolves come into the church with false teachings.
- 3) An elder must contend for the truth without being contentious.
- 4) He must maintain a dogmatic adherence to truth without having a dogmatic disposition.
- 5) He should set forth biblical arguments without being argumentative.

3. *The Heritage of Sound Doctrine.*

- a. Paul warned perilous times would come; men would resist truth; not endure sound doctrine; turn away from the truth.
- b. Elders are held accountable for maintaining the apostolic truth.
- c. Historically, the church did this through elders' explicit commitment by vows to uphold orthodox creeds, confessions, and catechisms.
 - 1) Orthodox means "straight thinking".
 - 2) Creeds and confessions provide a standard for testing faithfulness to the Scripture.
 - 3) Creeds and confessions are important for our message outside the church, to take the gospel to the world—Matthew 28:19–20.
 - 4) Creeds and confessions help us examine new ideas and doctrines that arise.
 - 5) Creeds and confessions help us hold the heritage of sound doctrine, from generation to generation, to preserve and maintain biblical truth.

4. Conclusion: The church needs faithful men, dependable men, who will keep their promises and persevere in maintaining biblical truth in the church.

Study Questions

1. In the introduction to this lecture, Rev. McCurley concluded that churches have failed throughout history because elders in the church failed to keep their promises to uphold sound doctrine. What are the implications for the church today?

2. Historically, in Presbyterian and Reformed churches, how does an elder enter into his office? What promises, or vows, does he make as he is ordained and installed?

3. What is meant by “holding fast”? Why is it important for an elder to hold fast to the truth of the Bible? How can he do that?

4. Paul says, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught.” What is required of a man regarding his study of the Word of God, in order to meet the qualifications for becoming an elder? Rev. McCurley says this requires diligence and hard work. What are some aids and tools to help them in this process?

5. What is the twofold exhortation to elders for holding fast the truth?

6. What does it mean “to exhort”? What is meant by the term “wholesome doctrine”? Why do we say that to believe what is false is a serious sin?

7. Where does the opposition against sound doctrine come from? How should the elder respond in this spiritual warfare against the opposition to truth?

8. What does the word “orthodox” mean? And what does the term “orthodox doctrine” refer to?

9. What do the words “creed” and “confession” mean? Why are creeds and confessions so important to the elder in this spiritual battle to uphold the true biblical doctrine?

10. What role do creeds and confessions play in our message outside the church? How do creeds and confessions help us in fulfilling the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20?

Further Study

1. It has been said that eager learners make excellent teachers. Do you get stirred up when you are studying the Word of God? What would you say to a Christian who tells you he has no time to study, and no desire to learn true doctrine or how to defend it?

2. There are some excellent formulas for the ordination of elders in the Presbyterian and Reformed churches. We highly recommend you look into these heritages and study them