

# FINDING THE RIGHT HILLS TO DIE ON

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Introduction

1. Do you have any prior interest or experience in the idea of “theological triage?” If so, what is it?
2. Of the five scenarios depicted on pp. 20-22, are there any that you identify with personally, either in your own experiences or in your observations of others?

### Chapter 1: The Danger of Doctrinal Sectarianism

1. Have you ever observed theological disagreement to harm the unity, mission, or holiness of the church? If so, how did this happen?
2. Re-read the Charles Spurgeon quote on p. 37. In your own experience, when is it difficult to have “a warm corner in your heart” for other Christians? Are there any particular practices or habits that have helped you cultivate love amidst disagreement?
3. Do you agree with Richard Baxter that Satan himself encourages theological zeal when it is separated from love (p. 41)? Is there anything in Scripture that might support or oppose this idea?

## Chapter 2: The Danger of Doctrinal Minimalism

1. Which error do you find more difficult to avoid, doctrinal sectarianism or doctrinal minimalism? Why?
2. Of the four reasons for the importance of non-essential doctrines listed on pp. 48-58, which is most compelling for you? Why?
3. Re-read J. Gresham Machen's quote on pp. 55-56. Do you agree that it is better to be wrong than indifferent about doctrine? Why or why not?

## Chapter 3: My Journey on Secondary and Tertiary Doctrines

1. Have you ever found yourself arriving upon a theological position that is socially inconvenient? What was that experience like for you?
2. This chapter discusses the author's journey on the issues of baptism, end times, and creation. Have you observed these three areas of doctrine to be divisive or polarizing in the church today? What other doctrines do you think tend to be divisive or polarizing in the church today?

## Chapter 4: Why Primary Doctrines Are Worth Fighting For

1. On p. 76 Erik Thoennes lists 8 criteria for determining the importance of a doctrine. Are there any of these that you think are more important than the others? Are there any you find less important? Why? (For reference, you might compare Grudem's list on p. 77, and the author's briefer, summative list on p. 78.)
2. On p. 82 Herman Witsius suggests that there may be people whom we would not allow into the membership of our churches, and yet still hope to see in heaven. Based on the discussion on pp. 80-82, do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. Suppose a new church plant is trying to decide whether to include the virgin birth of Christ in their statement of faith. Based on the discussion of J. Gresham Machen's views on this topic on pp. 82-87, how would you counsel them?
4. If Paul were alive today, are there any issues that you think would make him as mad as the Galatian error regarding justification? If so, what are they?

## Chapter 5: Navigating the Complexity of Secondary Doctrines

1. Do you agree that the importance of a doctrine can differ from one context to another (see especially p. 98)? If so, can you provide an example?
2. Do you think baptism is a 2nd-rank or 3rd-rank issue (see especially pp. 105-106)? Why?
3. Suppose that within one church there are Christians who believe that speaking in tongues is a valid gift today, and other Christians who deny that it is a valid gift today. Are there any ways the church could allow for this gift to be practiced without leading to division, or violating consciences of those who are against this practice?
4. Suppose your friend says, "if we claim to be 'gospel-centered,' our church/ministry should not have one particular view on women in ministry, whether complementarianism or egalitarianism. After all, this issue is not essential to the gospel." How would you respond?

## Chapter 6: Why We Should Not Divide over Tertiary Doctrines

1. Beyond the two topics listed in this chapter, are there any other examples of doctrines that you think are tertiary, but often treated as secondary (or even primary)?
2. Suppose in one church there are 3 pastors, each of whom hold to a different view of the millennium. What challenges do you think this situation could lead to? How might these pastors discourage division within the church about their differences?
3. Are there any views on the creation days within church history that surprised you as you read through pp. 137-143? Why do you think this topic tends to be so divisive in the church today?

## Conclusion

1. From your own experiences or observations, how does the presence of humility influence how theological disagreement affects the church?
2. Are there any areas where you need to exhibit personal theological humility right now? What might that look like? How can others pray for you in view of that?
3. Are there any other questions from this book you would like to discuss?