

Why Study Doctrine?

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What is a doctrine?

A doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches about a particular topic.

A doctrine answers the question, “What does the Bible say about _____?”

What is our source of doctrine?

God's written revelation in the Bible.

General revelation: Some things about God are reflected in things God has made.

Special revelation: God has spoken and acted in special, saving ways. The actions and words God wanted everyone to know have been written in the Bible. Doctrine comes from special revelation.

Complaints about doctrine

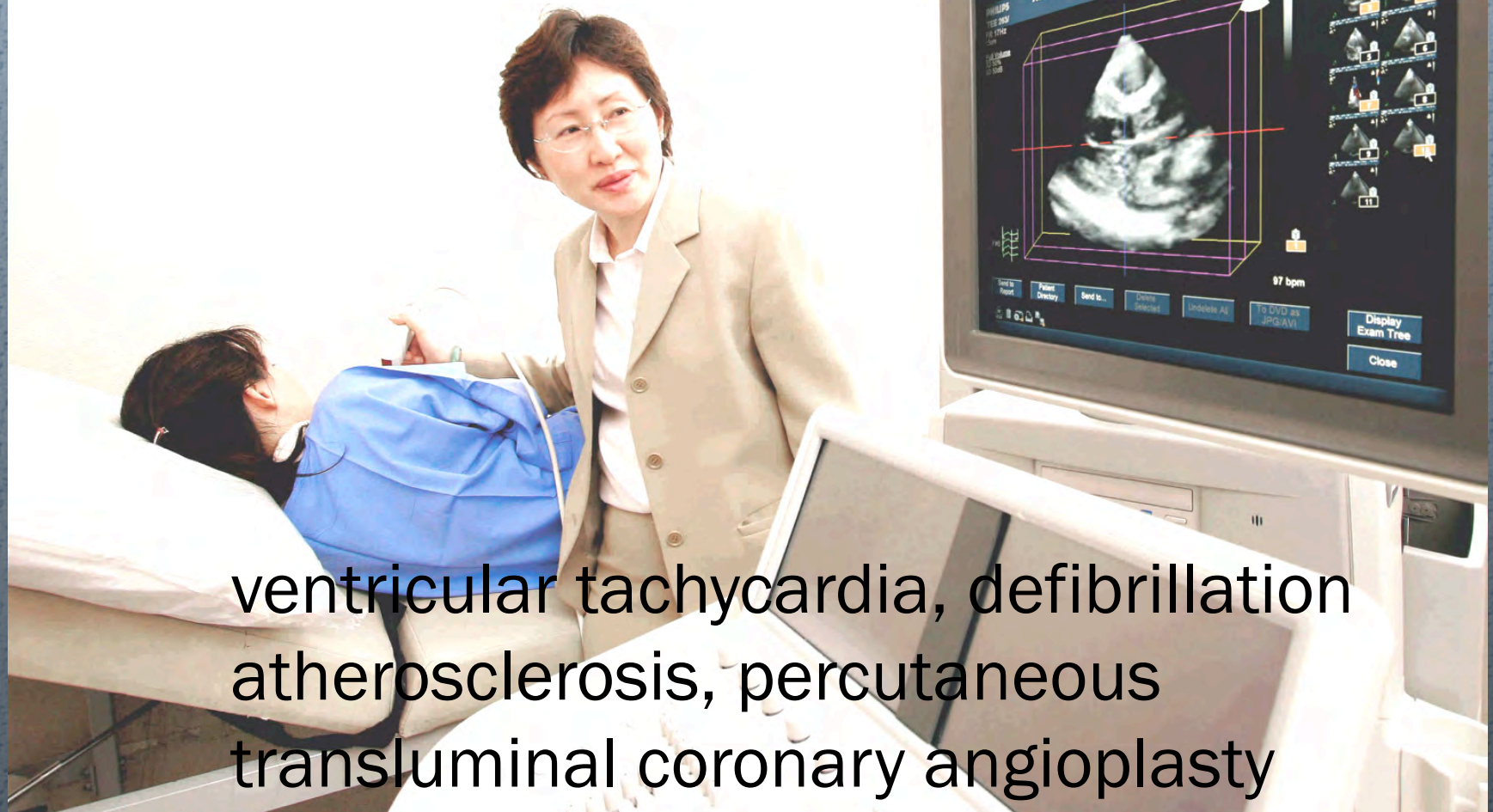
1. Isn't doctrine just a bunch of boring, big words?
2. Isn't experiencing God more real and important than studying doctrines?
3. Isn't dead doctrine a problem?

Are big words boring?

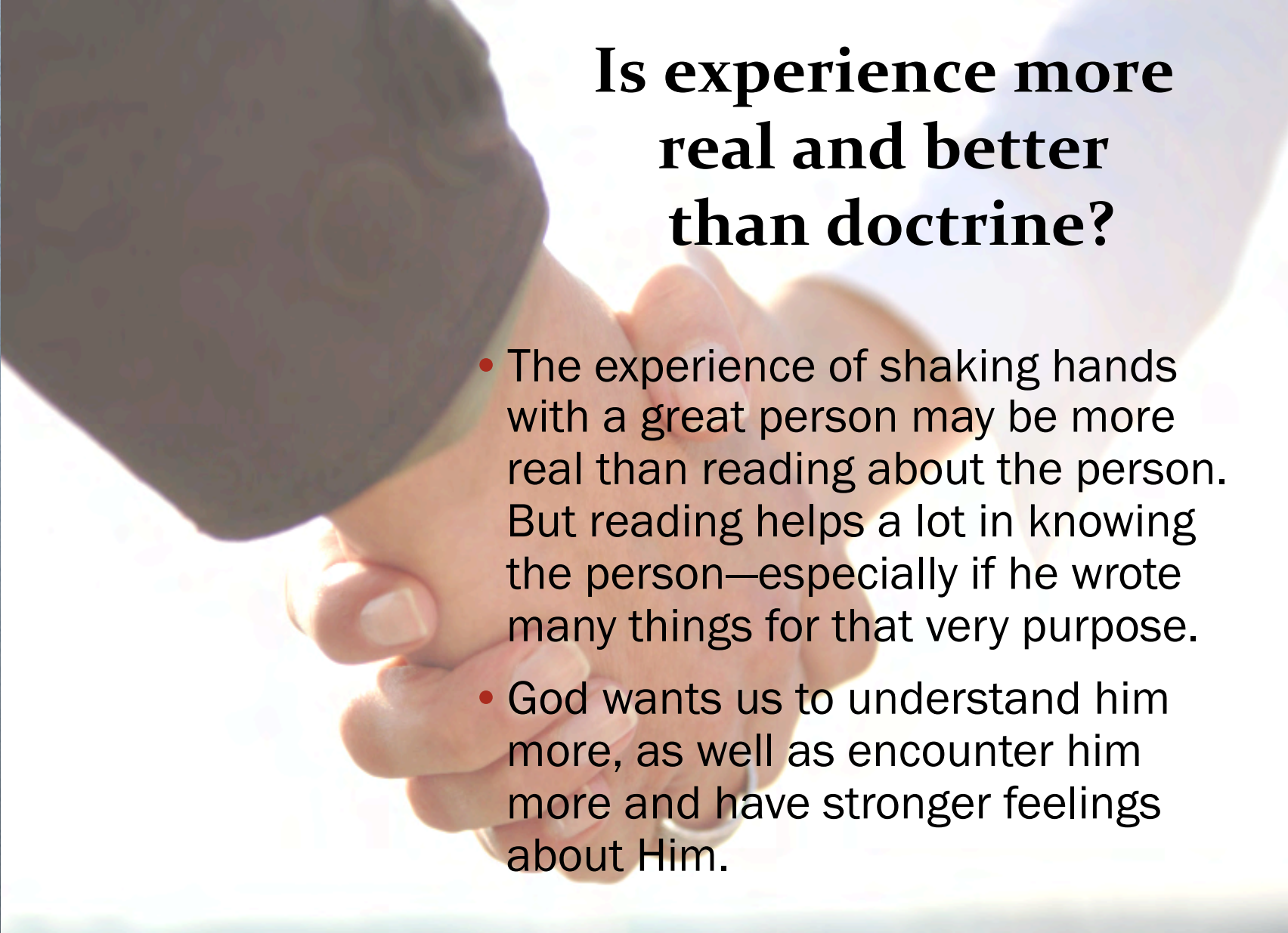
original sin, total depravity, condemnation,
atonement, redemption, reconciliation,
regeneration, justification, sanctification

ventricular tachycardia, defibrillation,
atherosclerosis, revascularization,
percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty

- Knowing problems
- Trusting a heart specialist

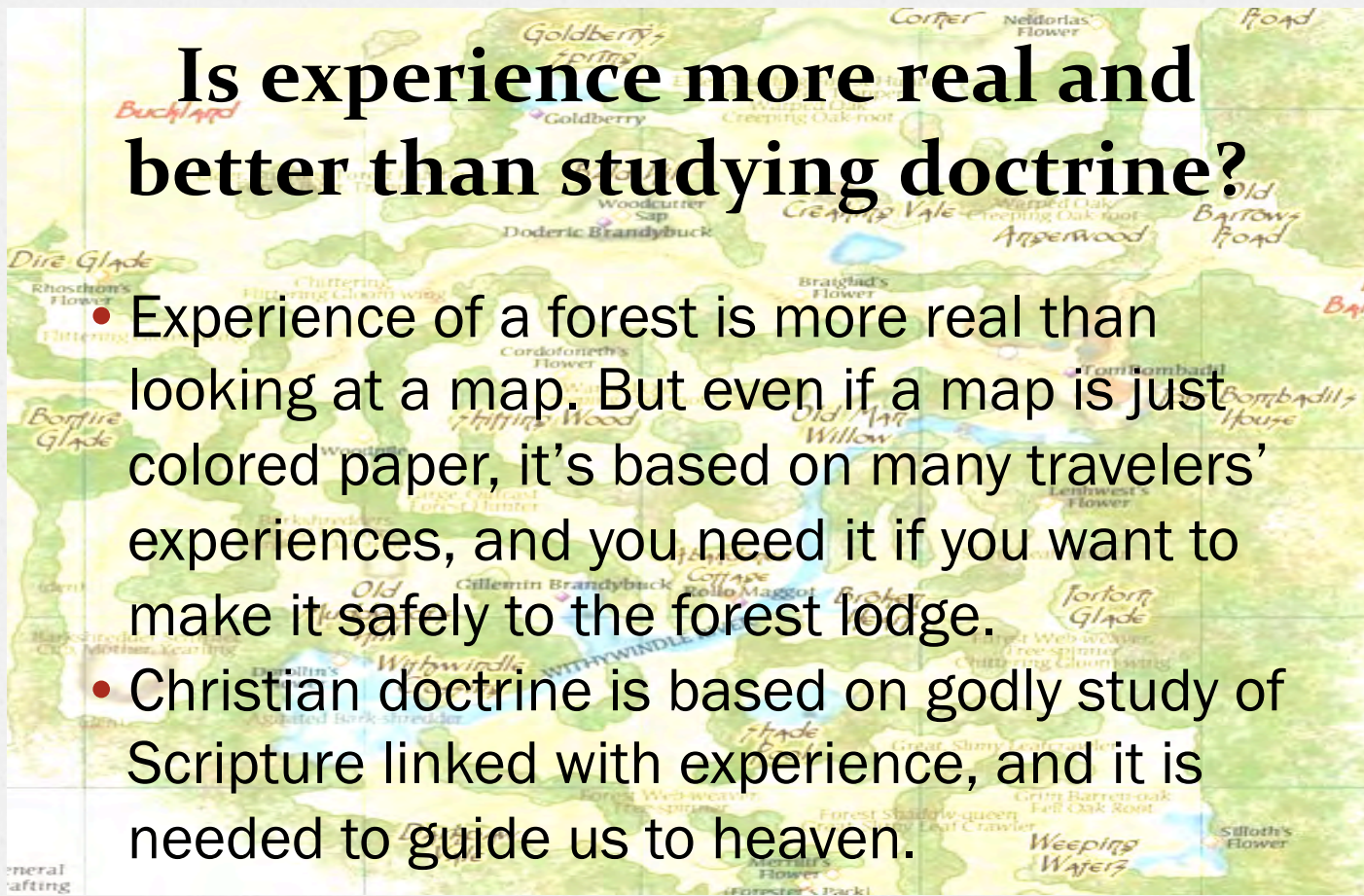


ventricular tachycardia, defibrillation
atherosclerosis, percutaneous
transluminal coronary angioplasty



Is experience more real and better than doctrine?

- The experience of shaking hands with a great person may be more real than reading about the person. But reading helps a lot in knowing the person—especially if he wrote many things for that very purpose.
- God wants us to understand him more, as well as encounter him more and have stronger feelings about Him.



Is experience more real and better than studying doctrine?

- Experience of a forest is more real than looking at a map. But even if a map is just colored paper, it's based on many travelers' experiences, and you need it if you want to make it safely to the forest lodge.
- Christian doctrine is based on godly study of Scripture linked with experience, and it is needed to guide us to heaven.



Isn't dead doctrine a problem?

- A human skeleton without breath and flesh is dead, and that's bad.
- But that doesn't mean a living human body would be better off without a skeleton! It would be a shapeless blob.



Answering complaints about doctrine

1. Big words can be valuable (and can also be explained in smaller words).
2. We need not just experiences but information and maps.
3. Lively Christianity has strong bones as well as a healthy heartbeat.

Why study doctrine?

4-D impact

1. Discover truth and meaning
2. Deliver from sin and hell
3. Defend against Satan's lies
4. Delight in God's glory

1. Discover truth and meaning

- Most people say they believe in God. But what God? Who is God? What is God like?
- Jesus died on a cross. So did countless others. How is Jesus different? Why does Jesus' death matter more?
- The gospel is the power of God for salvation. But what is the gospel?

2. Deliver from sin and hell

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:16)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. (Matthew 23:15)

3. Defend against Satan's lies

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim 4:1).

An elder must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus 1:9).

4. Delight in God's glory

... the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim 1:9-11).

More literal translation:

...the healthy teaching that matches the good news of the glory of the happy God.

Why do we exist?

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. (John Piper)

What is your only comfort in life and death?

That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him. (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 1)

A quick test of doctrine

When doctrinal viewpoints clash, it's helpful to ask: Which approach makes me smaller and God bigger? Which approach makes me bigger and God smaller. Usually the approach that limits God and enlarges me is wrong.

- My comfort is that I am not my own but His.
- My chief purpose is to glorify and enjoy God.

That is a good standpoint to study doctrine.

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