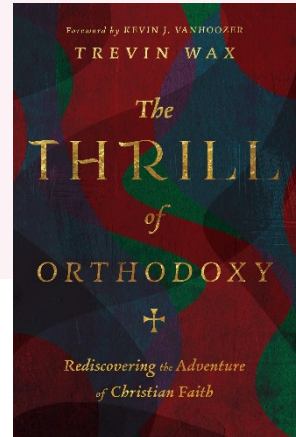




LEADER'S GUIDE

THE THRILL OF ORTHODOXY BY TREVIN WAX



"The way forward is to reach back, to find renewal in something old - foundational truths tested by time, a fount of goodness that refreshes and satisfies, long forgotten beauty from the past that lifts our eyes above the suffering and sorrow of the present... What the church needs today is to recapture the thrill of orthodoxy."

TREVIN WAX

THEMES

Orthodoxy Theology Importance of Creeds and Confessions Traditions Heresy
Doctrine Truth

BOOK SUMMARY

Do you hear words such as theology, orthodoxy and doctrine and immediately become disinterested or fearful?

Trevin's hope for us as readers is that this book will help to reawaken our appreciation for biblical and historical Christianity so that we may be steady and fruitful in the turbulent times we all know are coming. Recapturing a renewed sense of awe and wonder at the glories of the gospel, we can pay attention to signs of where the thrill might have faded and protect ourselves from drifting in error.

"The best way to counter the drift toward heresy is with the thrill of orthodoxy... the best way to avoid new errors is to love old truths."

Trevin gives the western church a diagnosis:

- We've lost our wonder of the Bible, and familiarity with it has cultivated heartened hearts and boredom.
- We're living in Cultural chaos, prone to forget our first love, chasing new teachings instead of clinging to age-old truths.
- We're complacent and living a compartmentalised living of the faith.

All of the above means we may be prone to assuming the truth of Christianity while focusing on something else. This problem is because "Assuming orthodoxy is the path to abandoning orthodoxy."

Orthodoxy is important. It's more than just a backpack we take with us during our Christian journey: it's a map with grammar, helping us walk and talk as faithful sojourners "with a compass always pointing us to God."



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS

1

Q. What was most enlightening while reading 'The Thrill of Orthodoxy'? How did your understanding of orthodoxy grow while reading this book?

TALKING POINTS

"Orthodoxy is the historic Christian consensus on the essential elements of the true faith and practise, what has been believed 'everywhere, always, and by all.' Call it 'classic Christianity' or 'mere Christianity, but a mere that doesn't mean 'minimal' or 'barely' but 'essential' and 'central'" (p9):

- "The opposite of orthodoxy is heresy, a word that refers to the denial or twisting of an essential Christian doctrine" (p10)
- "In between orthodoxy and heresy are 'errors'" (p10).

2

Q. Trevin discusses the importance of church creeds and confessions, and reminds us that splitting "creeds and deeds" negatively impacts orthodoxy. Have you ever focused too much on one and not the other? How can we better find a balance?

TALKING POINTS

"Loving the truth and loving one's neighbor are intertwined" (p61):

- "The scriptures speak of doctrines as something we *confess* – that is, a posture we adopt with our whole heart and mind. Doctrines are something we *walk in*, teaching is something we *abide in*, and the gospel is something we obey" (p59).
- "Apart from Christian theology, we don't know what the Christian life should look like. If we believe the Christian life should be characterised by hospitality, forgiveness, love, mercy and faith, we need Christian doctrine to fill those words with Christian meaning. Without doctrine, we're left with mere sentiment" (p73).
- When we focus on what we're doing instead of what Christ has done, we're drifting into moralism.
- "The best creed and confessions don't allow us to separate what we believe from what we do" (p60).
- Legalism: "We assume that we are good with God because of what we've done for him instead of what he's done for us". (ch 7)

3

Q. In chapter 2, 'Drifting from Orthodoxy', we see four characters in a 'danger of drifting' story. Could you see yourself in any of these people? If so, how could you prevent yourself from drifting? (p33).

TALKING POINTS

"How should we respond to the possibility of drifting? With faith, not fear" (p32):

- "The Christian life begins with spiritual astonishment... but over time, our eyes grow heavy and our taste buds dim – and that's when error creeps in" (p3).
- "Pragmatic drift is when we only care about theology if we spot its relevance in our day-to-day lives" (p58).

4

Q. Trevin says, "We will all be rooted in something. It's important that something... doesn't change with every new movement or era." Discuss the importance of holding to "old truths" (p18).

TALKING POINTS

"Truth is what is right regardless of time, situation, or circumstance" (p38):

- "When we think about truth in exclusively personal terms, we miss the adventure of seeking and finding something outside the confines of our own experiences" (p38).
- "Heroes of the faith are never indifferent about doctrine" (p48).
- New truths (or heresy) warp the gospel message, limit Christianity, and lead us astray.

5

Q. Discuss how boundaries in orthodoxy are freeing, while heresy is limiting.

TALKING POINTS

"Heresies, no matter how much they may be marketed as expansive and inclusive, are always smaller and narrower than orthodoxy" (p80):

- "Our culture conditions us to resist the lines and boundaries we've inherited from people in the past, but orthodoxy insists that certain limitations are necessary for freedom" (p44).
- "The contemporary view of freedom is to do whatever you want, to develop your own personal creed. But that way of thinking can't help but be narrow" (p45).
- "By insisting on human sinfulness, Christianity levels us and puts us all on the same playing field. We're cut down to size, from the prince to the pauper, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate" (p71):
- Common Heresy: Jesus is not the only way to God (Jesus is shrunk into just another deity), expanding traditional marriage (shrinks the sanctity of marriage as simply a legal partnership), inclusive versus exclusive Jesus (Jesus will accept all), Trinitarian controversies (misunderstanding of the Trinity and Jesus humanity), Modalism (one God, one person, revealing himself in three different ways), Gnosticism (dualism, material creation as evil).
- "From the outside, heresies always appear bigger than they are, and orthodoxy seems narrow. But from the inside, heresies are narrow slivers that multiply, and orthodoxy is the broad and overarching truth upheld by the God of the gospel" (p103).

6

Q. Trevin admits to mistakenly believing heresy about the Trinity. Can you think of a heresy you have believed? How was your wrong thinking corrected?

TALKING POINTS

"Though heresy has never been taught in my church, it has somehow wormed its way into my mind as the most logical way to hold Christ's divinity and humanity together" (p50):

- It's important to remember that just because we've misunderstood an aspect of theology, doesn't mean we're not a true believer in Christ, "My understanding of Christ's nature was in error, but I was a genuine believer" (p50).
- We must care about getting the details right because there are consequences to getting them wrong (p75).

7

Q. Discuss the role of humility and prayer in maintaining the thrill of orthodoxy.

TALKING POINTS

"The gospel is simple enough for a child to grasp, yet so complex that the greatest of scholars can only scratch the surface of its glory." (p77):

- "We can be grateful that it's not our perfect knowledge of Christ's nature and person that saves us, but Christ himself. It's not orthodox theology that saves, but the God whom orthodox theology describes. It is the reality that saves us, not our knowledge of that reality" (p51).
- "True humility leads us to self-correct when necessary, to bring ourselves in line with the rule of faith" (p51).
- "Humility is fundamental to the thrill of orthodoxy because it is the prerequisite for a willing, happy submission to something bigger than ourselves" (p51).
- Orthodoxy leads us to prayer; in our humble and accurate view of ourselves and God, we get on our knees and pray.

8

Q. Augustine said, "Christians are to stand against the world for the good of the world". Discuss the tension between speaking the truth in love and avoidance for peacekeeping. Have you experienced conflict while sharing your faith?

TALKING POINTS

"Christians who've experienced the thrill of orthodoxy can't help but respond when God is misrepresented, His character maligned, His power disregarded, or His portrait changed" (p68):

- "Strangely, the bloodiest revolutions have often been led by people who believed in humanity's innate goodness, that an earthly paradise was waiting on the other side of an idealistic pursuit of justice" (p72).
- "Christians pursue peace and righteousness, but we reject utopian dreams, acknowledging that over time, so long as humans are involved, even reforms will need to be reformed" (p72).
- "The Christians who went before us believed that getting doctrine right was a matter of life or death" (p124), and "The warnings exist because the dangers are real" (p127), and this is why they pursued orthodoxy, despite the tension it caused.

9

Q. "We are sinners in need of salvation, not merely sufferers in need of self-help". Discuss.

TALKING POINTS

Although popular mantras such as "you're enough" and "you've got this" can temporarily remove our self-doubt and boost our self-image or self-worth, they will all eventually fail us:

- It's against God's design for us to feel worthless as if we don't matter. Guilt and shame can be harmful to us.
- Our biggest problem is the fact of our guilt, but grace supplies the answer the self-help books cannot imagine (chapter 6).
- "The church is a hospital for sinners, but it is also a school for saints" (ch 8)
- None of us is enough, and that's why Jesus came. Knowing we're not enough free's us from striving and moralism to try and be enough; we instead rest in the finished work of Christ and trust He is faithful to finish a good work in us.

10

Q. "The word 'theology' means 'the study of God'. Can there be any greater subject than this?" (p66). How do you intend to study theology moving forward?

TALKING POINTS

"The thrill of orthodoxy involves an encounter with the most beautiful, most awe-inspiring, most worthy One. We think about him, read about him, praise him, implore him, commune with him – the one true God, the only one whose glories give us joy as we behold and ponder their number. How does it make sense to say theological details don't matter?" (p66):

You may like to collect some Bible study resources to show your book club or create a list of suggestions. Here are some resources BTB recommends (this is not an extensive list, but just a few favourites):

- EVS Women's Study Bible.
- How to Read the Bible Book By Book by Douglas Stuart, Gordon D. D. Fee
- The Daily Grace Co. Women's Bible Study Books <https://thedailygraceco.com/>
- Women of the Word by Jen Wilkin
- Bible Studies from The Gospel Coalition <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- Nancy Guthrie Books <https://www.nancyguthrie.com/books-video>
- Matthew Henry Commentary (both traditional and new English versions).



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