**A “Buffet Style” Christianity: Negotiables & Non-Negotiables of Christian doctrines**

It’s the dreaded “D” word! What is it? Doctrine! A study indicates that 36% of conservative Protestant youths think it’s okay to pick and choose parts of the faith they agree with. The number may not improve much with the adult Christians! In some ways, this is a reaction against intolerance that some Christians exhibit against other believers on account of not-so-essential doctrines. For instance, in 2005, *International Mission Board* of Southern Baptist Convention decided to no longer accept missionary candidates who speak in tongues; the vote was 50-to-15. As if that wasn’t intolerant enough, shortly thereafter, the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches severed ties with Cedarville University, a Christian school in Ohio, on account that the college decided to receive support from Southern Baptist Convention. Why? One reason was that although the Regular Baptists deemed that the Convention’s vote against speaking-in-tongues was a “step in the right direction,” it still wasn’t unanimous. Wow, isn’t this enough to forget about doctrines! So what should we do who are caught between the paleo-fundamentalists who knit-pick over every doctrine, and the postmodernists who hardly care about it?

**Read Judges 17:1-13.**

1. How does each person in this passage handle the doctrines of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament? They appear quite religious,

but looking closely, we find that they were reshaping the faith and doctrines of the Torah into what they saw fit. Discuss:

1. The mother who consecrates her silver to God but violated an important doctrine of the Old Testament (Exodus 20:4).
2. Her son who builds a shrine (Exodus 29:42-43), installed an Ephraimite as priest (Numbers 1:50), and makes an ephod (Exodus 39:1-2).
3. The wandering Levite who leaves his home to live somewhere else (Numbers 1:50-53, Joshua 21:41-42).

2. a. How does the writer of Judges sum up this period in verse 6? Discuss Hosea 4:6 as well.

b. Would you like to live in a society where anything goes? Give some examples of what everyone doing what he sees fit looks like today.

3. What are the negotiable and non-negotiables of the Christian doctrines?

a. Example of a negotiable doctrine: In the church in Rome, a dispute arose between those Jewish Christians who wanted to keep the Jewish

festive days and Kosher law (no pork) and those who did not because of the freedom they now had in Jesus. How does Apostle Paul

handle this situation? (Rom. 14:1-6)

b. Example of a non-negotiable doctrine: 1 John was written at the end of the first century to combat *Docetics* (meaning *appear* in Greek) who

taught that while Jesus appeared to have come in the flesh, he was all spirit in reality. How does John respond in 1 John 4:2-3? Also discuss

Galatians 1:6-7.

**Application:** Why do you think doctrine is not popular in the church today? What are practical ways you can understand and carry out the key

doctrines of the Christian faith?