

The Whole Truth About God: Biblical Theology

Series Introduction

Let's begin with a definition of terms. The term "biblical theology" can be used in two ways:

1. **A way of interpreting the Bible.** The term "biblical theology" has a technical meaning. It describes a "hermeneutical discipline" (or way of interpreting the Bible). Specifically, it's a discipline that attempts to trace the Bible's one main storyline through all of the Bible's books and genres. Biblical theology in this sense looks at how all of Scripture, in one way or another, points to the saving work of Jesus Christ.
2. **Sound doctrine.** The term can mean what the average person would think it means: theology that is biblical, or theology that accurately reflects what God has revealed of himself in his Word. A healthy church places a premium on sound doctrine. This second definition will be the focus of our study for the next six weeks.

Soundness is an old-fashioned concept, yet we should cherish soundness – soundness in our understanding of the God of the Bible and His ways with us. Paul uses this word a number of times in his pastoral writings to Timothy and to Titus. The word carries with it the idea of being accurate, reliable, and faithful. At its root, it comes from a medical term meaning whole or healthy. Biblically sound theology (sound doctrine) then, is theology that is faithful to the teaching of the entire bible. It accurately interprets the parts in terms of the whole, and it conforms to the gospel (1 Tim 1:10-11).

Church leaders are commanded to teach sound doctrine – doctrine that is reliable, accurate, and faithful to the Bible, and churches are responsible for keeping their leaders accountable to sound doctrine.

Our aim in this study will not be to dive into all of the finer points of doctrine or to work through a systematic theology. Instead, the focus of our study is going to be an understanding of what makes sound doctrine sound, and why it's so important for us as a church to know it, to think deeply about it, and to be shaped by it in life and practice.

The new testament places a strikingly high priority on theology and doctrine. According to the New Testament, sound doctrine (teaching that conforms to God's Word) is of first importance for the Christian life and for the entire church.

Session One: *What Is Sound Doctrine And Why Does It Matter?*

Getting Started

What are some objections to the need for sound doctrine/ theology that you've heard (*or said!*)?

Main Idea:

Sound doctrine is teaching that rightly explains what God has revealed to us in His word. Sound doctrine is essential to the church and the Christian life because it is a central means by which we grow to maturity in Christ. It is also the foundation and motivation for the things that should characterize the church (love, holiness, worship, witness, and unity).

Digging In

In 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, the Apostle Paul insists that sound doctrine is of first importance in the life of the church. Consider the following 7 passages:

1 Timothy 1:3-5; 1 Tim 4:16; 1 Tim 6:2b-4a; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2 Tim 2:15; Titus 1:9-11; Titus 2:1-2

Another way to define sound doctrine is to say that sound doctrine is the sum total of what the Bible teaches about a given topic. In other words, sound doctrine is what we get when we consider what all of scripture has to say about a given topic such as: the character of God, sin, salvation, the church, and so on.

1. Drawing on the 7 passages listed previously, let's examine what Paul has to say about the *characteristics* of sound doctrine (what it is & how it's described), and the *results* of sound doctrine (What follows when it is taught? How does it impact our lives?)

Characteristics of Sound Doctrine	Results of Sound Doctrine
It is teaching that accords with what the Apostles taught (1 Tim 1:3-5)	love that flows from a pure conscience & sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5)
It is founded on the very words of Jesus Christ (1 Tim 6:2-4)	It leads to salvation (1 Tim 4:16)
It establishes a pattern of life that we are to follow (2 Tim 1:13-14)	It leads to a life of faith & love (2 Tim 1:13-14)
It is something that has been entrusted to believers that we are to guard and preserve (2 Tim 1:13-14)	When we teach sound doctrine, we are commended by God & have no need to be ashamed before Him (2 Tim 2:15)
It is the standard by which God evaluates church leaders (2 Tim 2:15)	It silences false teaching and prevents the spiritual disaster that false teaching causes (Titus 1:11)
the standard and agenda of for what is taught in the church (Titus 2:1)	It produces godly character, healthy faith, love, endurance (Titus 2:1-2)

2. Is there anything that surprises you or stands out to you about the characteristics and results sound doctrine as you consider these passages?
3. Based on these passages, how would you respond to the suggestion that sound doctrine is something that changes through time?
4. Based on these passages, how would you respond to someone who says that sound doctrine is an optional add-on for intellectual Christians who are "heady" or enjoy that sort of thing?
5. As you consider these passages, would you say that Paul understands sound doctrine to be something purely intellectual? Consider especially 1 Tim 1:3-5, 1 Tim 6:2b-4a, and 2 Tim 1:13-14.
6. Reflecting on two of the previous passages (1 Tim 6:2b-4a & Titus 1:9-11), consider the characteristics and results of false teaching (doctrine that is not sound) in the table below...

Characteristics of False Teaching	Results of False Teaching
It contradicts the Apostle's teaching (1 Tim 1:3)	promotes speculation/controversy rather than a life of love (1 Tim 1:5)
It contradicts the words of Jesus (1 Tim 6:3)	It puffs up its teachers & its hearers with conceit (1 Tim 6:4)
It results from a refusal to submit to God (Titus 1:10) "rebellious/insubordinate"	It upsets whole families (Titus 1:11)
It consists of empty talk and deception (Titus 1:10)	It can be motivated by sordid gain (Titus 1:11)

7. Is there anything that struck you or surprised you about the characteristics or results of false teaching?
8. Based on these passages, what is the church supposed to do about false teaching? What does that look like for leaders? For members?

9. Can you think of some examples of practical consequences of abandoning sound doctrine?
 - a. What might happen in our lives if we forsake the Biblical doctrines of:
 - i. The inspiration and authority of scripture
 - ii. Salvation by God's grace alone through faith in Christ alone?
 - iii. The sovereignty and goodness of God?
10. Why would you say that sound doctrine is important for:
 - a. The corporate life of the church?
 - b. How a pastor prepares a sermon or how you prepare a bible study?
 - c. Your growth as a Christian?
11. Think of something that you struggle with in your Christian life... What Biblical doctrines can help you address this struggle?
 - a. How can you practically seek to grow in understanding and applying sound doctrine as it relates to this area?
12. Can you think of a struggle or potential problem in the life of an individual or in the life of the church that has been prevented or remedied by sound doctrine?