

The Whole Truth About God: Biblical Theology (Sound Doctrine)

Session Two: Sound Doctrine is for Love

Getting Started

1. Why do you think people so often set love and doctrine against each other?

Main Idea

In the church, sound doctrine is the basis for our love for one another, and love is the goal of sound doctrine.

Digging In

John's second Epistle powerfully fuses together love and sound doctrine. It's a very short letter, so let's consider the whole thing.

2 John

1. It's likely that "the elect lady and her children" in verse 1 is simply a way of referring to the entire local church John was writing to. Who, according to John, loves this local church? Why (vv. 1-2)?
2. What command does John give to the church in verses 5 and 6?
3. Who does John warn the church against in verses 7 through 11? How does he instruct the church to treat these individuals?
4. Notice that verse 7 starts with the word "for," which simply means "because." John is especially exhorting the church to love each other (vv. 4-6) because many false teachers are trying to deceive them with destructive doctrine (vv. 7-11). John evidently thought that the deceivers' false doctrine posed a serious threat to these Christians love for each other if they came to embrace it.

How could false teaching undermine Christian's love for each other? (Hint: Consider what verses 1-2 teach us about the basis of Christian's love for each other).

5. Based on John's teaching in this passage, how would you respond to someone who said, "What God cares about is not that we have the right doctrine, but that we love others"?

Another passage that tightly ties together love and sound doctrine is Paul's opening exhortation to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:3-5.

6. For what purpose does Paul tell Timothy to remain at Ephesus (v. 3)?
7. What practical consequences does this different doctrine lead to (v. 4)?
8. What is the goal of Paul's instruction to Timothy (v. 5)?
9. According to Paul, how do we grow in love? Is it simply an emotion we stir up in ourselves?
10. Based on Paul's teaching in this passage, how would you interact with someone who apparently loves to study theology (a "doctrine person") but whose life is not marked by consistent, sacrificial love for others?
11. How has your love for God and others grown as a result of being taught sound doctrine? Give specific examples.
12. What would it look like to love someone who:
 - a. Doesn't believe that Jesus is the only way to be saved
 - b. Is struggling to trust in God's sovereignty and goodness during a severe trial?