

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

Session Five: Sound Doctrine Is For Witness

Getting Started

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to speak publicly or give an answer for something but really didn't know what you were talking about? If so, describe what happened. How did it turn out?
 - a. What would have changed if you knew what you were talking about?
2. Have you ever heard the statement "preach the gospel, use words if necessary"?
 - a. What's helpful about this well-intended statement?
 - b. What is significantly wrong with this statement?
3. Read Romans 10:13-17... what does sound doctrine have to do with the "good news" that must be preached, heard, and believed, in order for anyone to call on the Lord and be saved?

Main Idea:

Sound doctrine is necessary for evangelism (witness) because evangelism is:

- 1) Telling others the *truth* about God, our sin, and what God has done in Christ to save sinners, and
- 2) Calling them to repent of their sin and to trust in Christ.

Digging In

Acts 17 records for us Paul's address to the Areopagus council in Athens... When Paul was in Athens, he preached the gospel in the synagogues to the Jews, he preached to the Greeks, and he preached day after day to anyone who happened to be in the marketplace (Acts 17:16-17). Eventually, he was brought before the Areopagus, a council of leading Athenians, to explain the "strange teaching" he was presenting...

Acts 17:16-34

1. Paul is witnessing in this text. Beginning in verse 23, what does Paul start to proclaim to the Athenians?
2. Examine the chart below and consider the various doctrines Paul proclaims to them...

Doctrine	Verse
The doctrine of God. This includes His lordship over all and His self-sufficiency.	Verses 24-28 (especially 24-25)
The doctrine of creation (including the creation of the whole universe)	Vs 24
The doctrine of man (God's special creation of man and the unity of the human race, and man's responsibility to serve God)	Vs 26 Vs 29-30
The doctrine of God's providence (His rule over man and direction of all of history)	Vs 26-28
The resurrection of Jesus Christ and his Lordship	Vs 31
The doctrine of God's final judgment	Vs 31

3. How did Paul's teaching about God confront the Athenian's religious beliefs and practices?
4. Look again at the list of doctrines that Paul proclaims in his speech... What are the things that Paul teaches about who God is and what He's done?
 - a. Why did the Athenians need to understand these things in order to understand the gospel?
5. In verses 25-29, Paul focuses specifically on God's creation of man and our relationship to Him. How would you summarize Paul's teaching in this section?
 - a. Why is it important for the Athenians to understand what Paul is emphasizing in this section? Do you think they could understand the gospel apart from understanding these things?
6. In light of this passage, how would you respond to someone who said that studying doctrine is irrelevant or even a distraction from the task of evangelizing?

In his speech, Paul probably spent so much time unpacking the biblical teaching on God, creation, mankind, and judgment because the Athenians were ignorant of the Bible's teaching on these topics, and they held false beliefs which led them astray from worshipping the true God. In other words, the Athenians were biblically illiterate, just as many people in the west are today...

7. What do you think are some of the most important lessons this passage gives us for evangelizing those who are unfamiliar with the Bible and its teachings?

Elsewhere in Acts, we read records of Paul's evangelistic addresses to the Jews, who had a thorough knowledge of the scriptures. In these addresses, Paul focuses on proving that Jesus is the Christ, the longed-for Messiah who fulfills all of God's promises to His people (see Acts 13:13-41)... So, Paul took a slightly different approach to evangelizing those who knew the Bible and those who didn't, but the substance of his teaching was always Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2)...

8. What doctrines may be especially important to emphasize when you're evangelizing someone who is familiar with the Bible, and perhaps considers himself or herself to be a Christian, but has not truly repented of sin and trusted in Christ for salvation?
9. What are some unbiblical beliefs that you often run into when you're sharing the gospel with others? What biblical doctrines are most helpful in addressing them?
10. How might growing in our understanding of sound doctrine encourage us to evangelize more?
11. What are some ways that growing in your understanding of biblical doctrine has helped you to be a better evangelist?