

The Importance of Sound Doctrine

The term “doctrine” could basically be defined as “teaching”. It refers to a belief or set of beliefs held to and taught by a person or by a group. Doctrine is always practical because it serves as a compass for our lives and, depending on the specific doctrine, it can have implications for salvation, for how we live, for how the church functions, etc... Christianity is formed around specific doctrine, and there is no aspect of our lives that is untouched by biblical doctrine.

“Sound” doctrine 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 doctrine then, is doctrine 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 (Titus 2:1) – doctrine that is reliable, accurate, and faithful to the Bible, and all Christians are to keep a close watch on their life and doctrine (1 Tim 4:16). Our aim in this study today is to be reminded of the importance of sound doctrine.

1. What Is Sound Doctrine and Why Does It Matter?

“Sound doctrine is teaching that rightly explains what God has revealed to us in His word.”

- a. Another way to define sound doctrine is to say that sound doctrine is what we get when we consider what all of scripture has to say about a given topic... Why is this definition important when we’re discussing topics such as the character of God? Or the relationship between faith & works in salvation?
 - i. Example: Read 1 John 3:2... What does “we shall be like him” mean? How does a Mormon understand the same statement? What’s the difference?
- b. Consider Matthew 28:18-20... How is sound doctrine important for discipleship?
- c. What are some practical consequences of abandoning sound doctrine?
 - i. Not simply about the conclusions, but also how you get there.
 - ii. Sound doctrine will erode without a sound hermeneutic (sound rules of interpretation).

2. Sound Doctrine Is For Unity (Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16, Philippians 2:1-2)

“Sound doctrine is one of the ways Christian unity becomes visible, and unity is one of the goals of sound doctrine”

- a. Read Ephesians 4:1-6... What is the command in verse 1? And how are we to do that in vs 2-3?
- b. Discuss the “Unity of the Spirit” and the implications for relationships and doctrine.
- c. Discuss the confusion between unity and charity
- d. Two general ways to think about how to maintain unity: 1) Diminish the significance of secondary matters in order to be accommodating. 2) Highlight the importance of secondary matters in order to know them and be corporately conformed to a standard.
- e. Read Ephesians 4:11-16... What does He give the ministers of the Word to the church for? (vs 11-12)
 - I. What goal is the church working toward? (vs 13)
 - II. What will be the result? (vs 14)
 - III. How do we get there? (vs 15)
 - IV. Ref. 1 Cor 1:10, Philippians 2:1-2... “being of the same mind”... “no divisions”...
- f. Why is doctrinal unity important for members of the same church?
 - I. How might this affect our mutual discipleship of one another?
 - II. How might this affect our cooperation in evangelism together?

3. Sound Doctrine Is For Love (2 John, 1 Timothy 1:3-5)

“Sound doctrine is the basis for our love for one another, and love is the goal of sound doctrine.”

- a. Why do people often set love and doctrine against each other? What’s the irony of this?
- b. Consider 1 Tim 1:3-5... Did Paul see these things as opposed to each other?
- c. How could false teaching actually undermine our love for people?

4. Sound Doctrine Is For Holiness (John 17:13-19, 1 Timothy 1:8-11)

“Sound doctrine is a central means by which Christians grow in holiness, and holiness is one of the goals of sound doctrine.”

- a. Read John 17:16-19... What does Jesus want for His followers?
- b. How does Jesus indicate this goal is accomplished?
- c. What are some ways that sound doctrine should equip a believer to live a more holy life?
- d. How does this shape the way we think about personal discipleship?

5. Sound Doctrine Is For Worship (Psalm 96, 1 Timothy 4:13)

“Sound doctrine fuels our worship of God because true worship is praising God for who He is and what He’s done”

- a. Can we truly worship God without sound doctrine? Why or why not?
- b. How does this understanding actually provide freedom in music selection and style, rather than promote division over style of music?
- c. According to 1 Tim 4:13, what else, besides singing, is part of public worship?
- d. If worship is declaring who God is & what He’s done, what else would we consider an act of worship?

6. Sound Doctrine Is For Witness (Acts 17:16-34, Romans 10:13-17)

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 trust in Christ.

- a. Consider Romans 10:13-17... how will non-believers call on the Lord and be saved?
- b. What do people need to know in order to call on the Lord and be saved? What does this have to do with sound doctrine?
- c. Why is it sometimes necessary for us to be patient and allow evangelism to take place over multiple conversations?
- d. How might growing in your understanding of sound doctrine help your evangelism?