

**WHY
DOCTRINE
IS SCRIPTURAL
AND IMPORTANT**



by
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When talking with Christians about doctrine, it has been my experience that many believers do not believe doctrine is important. In fact, many believers feel that talking about doctrine is unscriptural and divisive. My purpose in writing this tract on doctrine is to emphasize the importance of Biblical doctrine.

So let us begin. Let me confront the heart of the issue we face, head-on. Many believers feel doctrine is a dirty word. They have been taught to think this way, as they believe it divides the Body of Christ. One woman told me she only wanted to talk about the love of God. She did not know what her church believed and thought that what they believed was not important. “What is important is love,” she asserted. Another young man, when asked about what constituted a good church and what they needed to believe for him to join, stated that he had never thought about finding a church based on their belief system or doctrine.

There can be no doubt that doctrine has been misunderstood and misused. As a result, doctrine has indeed been divisive in Church history and continues to be divisive in our time. However, the

problem lies in our failure to understand the nature and purpose of doctrine, which is teaching or instruction. Doctrine is like a good teacher, provided by God to instruct and edify each of us individually and corporately as the Body of Christ. Sound doctrine is like the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic) of elementary school; it is the teaching, faith and practice of our Christian walk, like the very basic tools in a toolbox. Let me illustrate another way. A friend of mine named Mickey Elliott tells a story of when he was a youth:

“When I was a kid, my Dad gave me a real tool set. Nothing fancy, just the basics: hammer and nails, screwdriver, nuts and bolts, saw, wrench, and drill. He taught me how to use each of them properly. But as I began to use the toolkit on my own, it was frustrating. My creations were comical, my body bloodied and my patience fried. I came to believe my inabilities were the fault of the tools. I could not get them to work right. So I threw them all away. I junked the toolkit. I gathered up every single tool, put them in the toolbox, and triumphantly walked them to the garbage. And I felt better. I was relieved. Deep down the frustration was now compounded by guilt, but that did not matter: the pressure was off. The tools no longer confronted me with fears of inadequacy and failure.”

“Now it was my father’s job to take out the trash and he found them as I had discarded them. He rescued them, cleaned them up, and presented me with a life lesson: Rather than blame the tool for my own misery, wouldn’t it be better if I accepted responsibility for myself and began to use the tools wisely...as they were intended.”

Similarly, my reading and study of the Scriptures have led me to conclude this: the Bible demonstrates over and over again that doctrine is not only Scriptural, but essential for godly living. We dare not throw it out simply because we have failed to understand its scriptural foundations and how to use it patiently and effectively.

Therefore, it is crucial we ask as our first question: What does the Bible say about doctrine? Webster defines the word doctrine as “teaching or instruction.” This is also basically the Biblical definition of doctrine. The Bible is not afraid to use the word for it uses it extensively. If you were to get out a concordance and count, you would find the word doctrine or doctrines used 56 times in the Bible. That is not an insignificant number. If the word of God uses the term this often, we need to agree with God and His Word on its meaning and importance.

Notice how the following passages underscore the Scriptural significance of the word:

II Timothy 3:16 *“All scripture is given by*

inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”

Why would the Bible describe doctrine as being profitable if it were not scriptural and important? Why would the Scriptures say doctrine is inspired of God and given by the inspiration of God if it were not so?

II Timothy 4:2 & 3 *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears”*

Paul is quite clear in his writings that doctrine is to be preached. He says to Timothy to exhort his hearers with doctrine. Then, he warns that the day will come when believers (and non-believers) will not embrace or accept sound doctrine. Have we come to that day? Is that what we encounter from Christians when we try to discuss doctrine? If doctrine is not being preached then what is being preached? Can you think of anything that has replaced Christian Bible teaching? Unfortunately, Church or denominational doctrine or dogma has replaced Biblical doctrine.

Remember, doctrine is teaching. The Bible is our teacher and is all about instruction. Jesus spoke about doctrine. **Matthew 7:28 & 29** says, *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings,*

the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Again we read in **Luke 4:32**, “*And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.*” This was because Jesus’ doctrine was simple and effective.

John 7:16-17 “*Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*”

Why would the Lord make such a statement regarding doctrine if it were not scriptural and important? Why would He speak of knowing the truth (which is defined as sound doctrine), if that isn’t the case? If it is not sound doctrine, then there is no truth! They are united like two sides of the same coin. You cannot separate the two.

Thus, the Bible and doctrine are one when interpreted correctly and used properly. Doctrine is a Biblical concept defined, authorized, and utilized by both Jesus and Paul as standard practice for the faith.

Because of this truth and understanding, it is important; indeed, it is crucial, for each of us to use doctrine as our standard and definition of the Christian life.

In Scripture, God uses the idea of a plumb line to describe what He is doing with His people (**Amos 7: 7-8**). A plumb line is used to determine if an object, like a wall, is straight and centered. God built His People like a straight wall, true to plumb.

When we depart or stray from Him, one of our problems is that we do not realize how far we have departed.

The Leaning Tower of Pisa is a physical example of our problem. It is a bell tower built in Pisa, Italy. The tower is 177 feet tall and is made from solid marble. The ground beneath the tower was not solid enough to support the weight of the tower and it began to sink on one side. Now the tower leans more than 17 feet off center. Each year, the tower slips a bit more off center. The whole building is leaning. If we looked at just the walls, we would think the building is straight but when a plumb line is used, the building is exposed as off center. The problem is with the foundation. If the foundation were firm and solid, the building would be in line as well.

Similarly, doctrine is our plumb line, the “absolute center” built on the rock solid foundation of Jesus Christ. By examining the Scriptures daily and applying sound doctrine we can grow spiritually in our Christian lives. Doctrine is a teacher and instructor. We get our bearings from doctrine centering us in His Will.

Isaiah 28:17 “*I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line...*”

Without doctrine, there is no plumb line for

measuring. The foundation may look fine when in fact, a storm will come and knock it down. Waters will overwhelm and sweep away “your life” without the solid foundation of sound doctrine.

I Timothy 4:1-3 “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*”

Seducing spirits would include those that do not think doctrine is scriptural and important.

Romans 16:17 “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*”

By embracing false doctrine, we create divisions in the body. Sound doctrine unites.

Paul wrote to Timothy concerning doctrines of devils and outlines a few characteristics or examples in these verses. When we see the cults abounding and the belief systems that are anti-Christ (***I John 4:1-3***), we easily recognize false doctrines if we know sound doctrine. Believers need to be equipped to refute those that oppose Christians by embracing sound and good doctrine.

I Timothy 4:6 “*If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good*

minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.”

Timothy was to give out “*good doctrine*” to his flock. He was to preach good doctrine that would be nourishing and words of faith that would build up the assembly and edify the saints.

1 Timothy 4:16 “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*”

Does the Bible teach us not to discuss doctrine, and if so, where? Or does it encourage us to give attendance to doctrine? Does the Bible ever teach that sound doctrine divides the body of Christ or the Church? Obviously, false doctrine divides so we are to be aware of these devilish doctrines as Paul admonished.

Titus 1:9 “*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*”

Can we exhort and convince without knowing sound doctrine? We are commanded to use sound doctrine to exhort, refute and convince others. By knowing sound doctrine, we are witnesses to believers and nonbelievers alike. We can show them where they have missed the will of God and encourage them to return to a place of blessing and protection by agreeing with and obeying the revelation of His sound instruction.

If I were the enemy of God's people, I would do everything to convince them that doctrine is unscriptural and unimportant. **Titus 2:10** "...*Shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*" May we adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. We adorn the doctrine of God when we allow it to govern every aspect of our life. A life instructed by sound doctrine displays the beauty of knowing and obeying the will of God.

II Timothy 2:15 "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

We are encouraged to study and rightly divide the Word of God. Only by believing that doctrine is important and scriptural will believers rightly divide the Word.

I urge you to get a concordance and look up ALL the scriptures regarding doctrine. The Bible makes it perfectly clear that sound doctrine is scriptural and important to all believers. And then go on to perfection by not only studying, but heeding sound doctrine.

Matthew 7:25-28 "*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and*

the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine”

Notice, the people were astonished at his doctrine. If you refuse to acknowledge that doctrine is scriptural and important, you will be building your house on the sand.

Sound doctrine is the rock to build your house and Christian life upon! Sound doctrine is the building material for the whole structure as well. (***I Corinthians 3:10—15***) We continue to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ by embracing sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is the rock that produces godliness. We need to build our Christian lives upon and with the doctrine of the Word of God.

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