Does Doctrine Matter?

Countless varying and contradicting doctrines taught are practiced within “Christianity”. It is commonly accepted that this does not matter. It is thought that individuals can serve Christ by means of the doctrine of their choosing, that Christ is pleased with this, and that the adherents of the varying doctrines will one day be side by side with each other in heaven. But, what does the N.T. teach? Does doctrine matter?

Paul wrote to two young evangelists, Timothy and Titus. As might be expected in letters to teachers there is much said concerning doctrine (teaching). Throughout 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, when Paul spoke about doctrine, he emphasized the quality of doctrine, especially that it must be “sound”.

“Sound” is defined as “to be healthy, sound in health.” (Vine, p. 1068) We get our English word “hygiene” from the Greek word we translate as “sound”.

Paul wrote very clearly to Timothy what “sound” words are. Sound words are “those of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 6:3). The words of the Lord consist of His whole New Testament (not just the words printed in red in our Bibles).

As sound doctrine is the words of Jesus, the Lord and King, it must be spoken with all authority, for the Father has given Him the right to command (Tit 2:1, 15; Mt 28:18). He has the right to tell us what is immoral and what is moral.

Killing one’s parents, murdering anyone, having sex outside of marriage, engaging in homosexuality, kidnapping, lying, and perjury are all contrary to sound doctrine. Jesus said so (1 Tim 1:9-10). His gospel is the unchanging standard of morality.

Sound doctrine is a doctrine conforming to godliness (1 Tim 6:3). Healthy doctrine is a doctrine that instructs men to live pure, holy lives, with behavior in keeping with the character of God.

Paul commanded Timothy to retain or hold fast the standard of sound doctrine. How would he do this? By guarding the treasure that had been entrusted to him (2 Tim 1:13-14). The words of Jesus Christ are a treasure that must be protected, defended and kept pure from the onslaught of men who would change and pervert them.

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Titus was directed by Paul to appoint elders in every city in Crete. These overseers had to meet certain criteria before being appointed. One of the qualifications was that they had to be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. It was not enough for the elders to be able to tell the congregation what was sound. They had to recognize the unhealthy teaching for what it was and expose it. They had to be equipped to silence the deceivers who were upsetting whole families because of their teaching (Tit 1:9-11).

The qualifications and instructions for elders are a clear indication that doctrine does matter. Only sound doctrine- the words of the Lord- is acceptable.

Paul gave Timothy a solemn charge to preach “the word in season and out of season” (when it was popular and when it was not popular), reproving, rebuking, and exhorting. Why was this charge given? The apostle foretold that men would not endure sound doctrine. They would not want to hear what the Lord had to say. Instead they would want men to tickle their ears by preaching that they could do what they pleased and still be acceptable to the Lord. So they would find teachers to teach what they wanted to hear. They would turn their ears away from the truth to myths (2 Tim 4:1-5).

We are witnesses to the fulfillment of this passage. Whatever you want to be taught, whatever would please you, you can find someone to teach it. New doctrines continue to multiply according to the desires of men. But let us be plain. Such doctrines are not “sound” doctrine. And, any doctrine that is not taught by the Lord in His N.T. is not the truth, but fiction!
Does not teach and practice sound doctrine.

4) Do you teach sound doctrine or are you conceited enough to teach something different? If you understand that doctrine matters because Jesus rightly possesses all authority, then you will realize how extremely prideful it is to teach something that does not correspond to His words. You will humbly speak only what has come out of the mouth of God (1 Pet 4:11). Doctrine does matter. And it matters whether or not you accept that doctrine matters.

Your eternal destiny will be shaped by either your acceptance or rejection of this truth.

THE SPIRIT SPEAKS EXPLICITLY

In view of Paul’s teaching about the importance of sound doctrine in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, let me ask you some questions for self-examination:

1) Is the doctrine that you believe and practice “sound” doctrine? There is only one way to find out, to compare what you believe with the words of Jesus (1 Tim 6:3). If you understand that doctrine matters, you will be motivated to do some intense study of the gospel of Christ.

2) Do you research the teaching that you hear to make sure that it is sound doctrine and not the doctrine of the devil? I read a book about preaching that sadly said that preachers can preach whatever they want because their listeners wouldn’t know a heresy if it stood up on its hind legs and barked at them. You will put every preacher or teacher to the test to see if they are teaching “sound” doctrine.

3) Do you endure sound doctrine or do you look for someone to teach what you want to hear? The devil’s lie that doctrine doesn’t matter leads everyone to believe that they can just shop around until they find the doctrine that they like and sit under that teaching. If you understand that doctrine matters, then you will look for and submit to sound doctrine, even if it means that you must go through the uncomfortable process of admitting that your belief or practice has been wrong, changing to obey the Lord, and severing your fellowship with a church that does not teach and practice sound doctrine.

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

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South Marion church of Christ
3629 South Washington Street
Marion, IN 46953

Schedule of Services:
Sunday
Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM & 5:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Elders:
David Huber 998-7134
Alan Jones 922-7602
Mike Huber 998-2520
Gary Pickering 384-4347

Deacons:
Mike Huber 998-2520
Gary Pickering 384-4347

Evangelist:
Alan Jones 922-7602

A Warm Welcome Awaits You!