



## Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

### Lesson 26: What Is Sound Doctrine and Why Does It Matter?

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#### INTRODUCTION

Theology has gotten a bad rap lately. To some, the very word “theology” conjures up images of medieval monks in ivory towers musing over how many angels can stand on the head of a pin. Others think of sleep-inducing lectures. To others, it signifies an outdated way of thinking that simply doesn’t work for postmodern people.

1. What are some objections to theology that you’ve heard? (Or said!) \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

The New Testament consistently places a strikingly high priority on theology and doctrine. According to the New Testament, sound doctrine—that is, teaching that conforms to God’s Word—is of first importance for the Christian life and for the entire church.

#### MAIN IDEA

Sound doctrine is teaching that rightly explains what God has revealed to us in his Word. Sound doctrine is essential to the church and the Christian life because it is a central means by which we grow to maturity in Christ.

#### DIGGING IN

Throughout 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, the apostle Paul insists that sound doctrine is of first importance in the life of the church. Consider the following passages:

- **1 Timothy 1:3–5**
- **1 Timothy 4:16**
- **1 Timothy 6:2b–4a**
- **2 Timothy 1:13–14**
- **2 Timothy 2:15**
- **Titus 1:9–11**
- **Titus 2:1**

## WHAT IS SOUND DOCTRINE?

Sound doctrine is the sum total of the Bible's teaching on any given topic.

In other words, sound doctrine is what we get when we consider what all of Scripture has to say about a given topic: the character of God, sin, salvation, the church, and so on. In the passages above, Paul's references to sound doctrine especially focus on the good news about Jesus Christ and how we are to live in light of that good news.

## HOW DO WE GET SOUND DOCTRINE?

Think about what we do when we read different passages that explain God's character. First John 4:8 says that God is love. Yet in other passages we learn that God is just and holy and therefore that his wrath burns against sin (see Hab. 1:13).

So what do we do? Pick and choose the passages we like? Claim that if God is loving, then he would never punish people for their sin? Of course not. As Christians, we embrace all of what Scripture teaches about God, so we come to understand that God is both just and loving, both kind and severe, both holy and merciful. This developed, comprehensive picture of God's character is one aspect of sound doctrine.

1. Drawing on the seven passages listed before, consider the characteristics of sound doctrine (What is it? How does Paul describe it?) and results of sound doctrine (What follows when sound doctrine is taught? How does it impact our lives?). Also, list the verse each characteristic or result comes from.

<b>Characteristics of Sound Doctrine</b>	<b>Results of Sound Doctrine</b>

2. Based on Paul's teaching in these passages, how should you respond to someone who says that sound doctrine is something that changes through time? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Based on these passages, how should you respond to someone who says that sound doctrine is an optional add-on for intellectual Christians who enjoy that sort of thing? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Based on these passages, would you say that Paul understands sound doctrine to be something purely intellectual? (See especially passages 1, 3, and 4.) Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are some characteristics and results of false teaching (see especially passages 3 and 6)?

<b>Characteristics of False Teaching</b>	<b>Results of False Teaching</b>

6. Based on Paul's teaching in these passages, what are pastors supposed to do about false teaching? What should be done about false teaching? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What are some practical consequences of abandoning sound doctrine? What might happen in our lives if we forsake the biblical doctrines of:
- a) The inspiration and authority of Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Salvation by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c) The sovereignty and goodness of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Why is sound doctrine important for:<sup>1</sup>
- a) The corporate life of the church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b) How a pastor prepares a sermon or you prepare a Bible Study? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Your growth as a Christian? \_\_\_\_\_  
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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Bobby Jamieson, *The Whole Truth about God: Biblical Theology*, ed. Mark Dever, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 15.