



## Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

### Lesson 27: Sound Doctrine is for Love and Holiness

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#### INTRODUCTION

How does sound doctrine impact the life of the believer? Often times we hear in the church that “doctrine divides.” However, sound doctrine is necessary to grow the believer in love and in holiness.

1. Why do people often set love and doctrine against each other? \_\_\_\_\_  
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As we saw in the previous study, we need sound doctrine, and it is important in the life of the church. Building on this theme, in Section I, we are going to see how sound doctrine leads to true Christian love. In Section II, we will see how sound doctrine is necessary for the Christian’s growth in holiness.

#### MAIN IDEA

In the church, sound doctrine is the basis for our love for one another, and love is the goal of sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is also a central means by which Christians grow in holiness, and holiness is the goal of sound doctrine.

#### I. Sound Doctrine is for Love

John’s second Epistle powerfully fuses together love and sound doctrine. It’s a very short letter, so let’s consider the whole thing:

##### 2 John

1. It’s likely that “the elect lady and her children” in verse 1 is simply a way of referring to the entire local church John was writing to. Who, according to John, loves this local church? Why (vv. 1–2)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
2. What command does John give to the church in verses 5 and 6? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Who does John warn the church against in verses 7 through 11? How does he instruct the church to treat these individuals? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Notice that verse 7 starts with the word “for,” which simply means “because.” John is especially exhorting the church to love each other (vv. 4–6) because many false teachers are trying to deceive them with destructive doctrine (vv. 7–11). John evidently thought that the deceivers’ false doctrine posed a serious threat to these Christians’ love for each other if they came to embrace it.

How could false teaching undermine Christians’ love for each other? (Hint: Consider what verses 1–2 teach us about the basis of Christians’ love for each other.) \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Based on John’s teaching in this passage, how would you respond to someone who said, “What God cares about is not that we have right doctrine, but that we love others”? \_\_\_\_\_

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Another passage that tightly ties together love and sound doctrine is Paul’s opening exhortation to Timothy.

**1 Timothy 1:3–5**

6. For what purpose does Paul tell Timothy to remain at Ephesus (v. 3)? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What practical consequences does this “different doctrine” lead to (v. 4)? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What is the goal of Paul’s instruction to Timothy (v. 5)? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. According to Paul, how do we grow in love? Is it simply an emotion we stir up in ourselves? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Based on Paul’s teaching in this passage, how would you interact with someone who apparently loves to study theology (a “doctrine person”) but whose life is not marked by consistent, sacrificial love for others? \_\_\_\_\_

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So, what we see in both of these passages is that sound doctrine is the foundation for love. It’s what fuels and enables love, for others and for God. None of us should have sound doctrine without love, and none of us can truly have love without sound doctrine.

## II. Sound Doctrine is for Holiness

In John 17, Jesus prays for His disciples in view of His impending death and resurrection. After praying that God would keep them in His name, just as Jesus Himself had kept them in God’s name, He continues:

### John 17:13-19

1. According to verse 13, what is the goal of Jesus’s prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How does Jesus intend for this goal to come about (v. 13)? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What does Jesus ask the Father to do in verse 17? \_\_\_\_\_

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To “sanctify” something means to set it apart or devote it to a specific purpose. For a person to be sanctified is for that person to be separated from sin and totally devoted to God’s purposes. The Bible teaches that as Christians we have been sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11). That is, when we became Christians we were purified, given new natures, and set apart for God’s service. It also teaches that we are being sanctified as we grow in overcoming sin and obeying God (1 Thess. 4:1–3).

4. What are some practical examples of what sanctification looks like in everyday life? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. In verse 17, Jesus prays that the Father would sanctify us by His Word, which is truth. What are some ways in which people attempt to pursue holiness that ignore or bypass or minimize God’s Word? \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_
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In 1 Timothy, Paul shows that life and doctrine are inseparable.

**1 Timothy 1:8–11**

6. In this passage Paul mentions a long list of immoral behaviors that appears to be a condensed summary of the Ten Commandments. What does he say that these immoral actions are contrary to (v. 10)?
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- \_\_\_\_\_
7. What does the answer to the previous question teach us about sound doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_
8. In light of Paul’s teaching in this passage and Jesus’s prayer in John 17, how would you respond to someone who said, “What matters to God is that we live holy lives, not that we have good theology”?
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9. How should this inseparable bond between sound doctrine and holy living inform a pastor’s regular preaching? \_\_\_\_\_
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10. A church’s work of evangelism and missions should result from its growing love, but it should also result from its growing holiness. Do you see the connection between the call to holiness and the call to evangelize? What is it? <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
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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), 21–27.