



Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

Lesson 28: Sound Doctrine is for Worship and Witness

INTRODUCTION

Sadly, worship is a battleground in many churches today. Conflicts over volume, instrumentation, and style frequently divide churches. In all of these “worship wars,” the focus is almost exclusively on music, and especially on the style of music.

Those involved in such conflicts may be surprised to learn that the Bible tells us very little about the style of music churches should sing. However, the Bible does provide a pattern for what we are to sing. What informs our singing? Sound doctrine. Not only does sound doctrine inform our singing but it also informs every area of worship in our lives. Thus, sound doctrine is necessary for worship.

As we saw in our previous studies, we need sound doctrine, and it is important in the life of the church. It is important for our love for God and others and for our own personal holiness. Building on this theme, in section I, we are going to see how sound doctrine leads to true worship. In section II, we will see how sound doctrine is necessary for our witness to a dying world.

I. Sound Doctrine is for Worship

MAIN IDEA

Sound doctrine fuels our worship of God because true worship is praising God for who He is and what He has done.

DIGGING IN

Psalm 96

1. What does the psalmist command his hearers to do in verses 1 and 2a? _____

2. What does the psalmist command his hearers to do in verses 2b and 3? _____

3. In several places in this psalm, the author gives reasons why people should worship God and declare His greatness to others. What are those reasons? (Hint: Look for the word “for.” This indicates that the author is giving a reason for his command to worship God.) _____

4. In verse 8, the psalmist invites us to “ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name.” What does that mean? What does this verse teach us about worship? _____

5. What does the psalmist command us to declare to the nations and peoples? (See vv. 2–3, 10.)

6. How is telling others about God’s glory, salvation, and sovereignty an act of worship? _____

7. As we’ve seen in this psalm, the heart of worship is giving glory to God for who He is and what He has done. How then does sound doctrine relate to worship? _____

8. Can we truly worship God without sound doctrine? Why or why not? _____

9. If sound doctrine is what fuels our worship, what kind of songs should churches sing? _____

10. Based on this psalm’s teaching, how would you respond to someone who viewed worship as a purely emotional, ecstatic experience, something that’s too deep for words? _____

11. In 1 Timothy 4:13 Paul commands Timothy, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.” In light of Psalm 96, explain why public Scripture reading in a church service is an appropriate act of worship. _____

12. Many Christians think of worship exclusively in terms of singing, so their churches have the “worship” time and then the sermon. In light of this psalm’s teaching, how would you say preaching relates to worship? Is preaching, and listening to preaching, an act of worship? _____

II. Sound Doctrine is for Witness

MAIN IDEA

Sound doctrine is necessary for evangelism 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 to trust in Christ for salvation

DIGGING IN

Acts 17 records for us Paul’s address to the Areopagus council in Athens. This passage is often cited as an example of how Christians should adapt the method of our evangelism to suit different cultural contexts, or how we should search for points of contact with non-Christians in order to share the gospel with them. But Paul didn’t merely adapt his style or find points of contact with his hearers in Acts 17—he evangelized them by preaching sound doctrine.

When Paul was in Athens, he preached the gospel to anyone who happened to be in the marketplace (Acts 17:16–17). Eventually he was brought before the Areopagus, a council of leading Athenians, to explain the “strange teaching” that he was presenting.

Acts 17:22–34

1. How does Paul address the Athenians’ religious beliefs in this speech? What does he proclaim to the Athenians? (See v. 23 in particular.) _____

2. What are all the different biblical doctrines that Paul explains or refers to in this passage?

Doctrine	Verse

3. How did Paul’s teaching about God confront the Athenians’ religious beliefs and practices? _____

4. Why did the Athenians need to understand these things in order to understand the gospel? _____

5. In verses 25 through 29, Paul focuses specifically on God’s creation of man and our relationship to Him. What is a good summary of Paul’s teaching? _____

6. Why was it important for the Athenians to understand all of these biblical teachings we discussed in question 5? _____

7. In light of this passage, what is an appropriate response to someone who says that studying doctrine is a waste of time, a distraction from the task of evangelism? _____

In this speech, Paul probably spent so much time unpacking the biblical teaching on God, creation, mankind, and judgment because the Athenians were ignorant of the Bible’s teaching on these topics, and they held false beliefs which led them astray from worshipping the true God. In other words, the Athenians were biblically illiterate, as are many people in the West today.

- 8. What are some of the most important lessons this passage gives us for evangelizing those who are unfamiliar with the Bible and its teachings? _____

Elsewhere in Acts, we read records of Paul’s evangelistic addresses to Jews, who had an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures. In these addresses, Paul focuses on proving that Jesus is the Christ, the longed-for Messiah who fulfills all of God’s promises to His people (see, for example, Acts 13:13–41). So, Paul took a slightly different approach to evangelizing those who knew the Bible and those who didn’t, although the substance of Paul’s preaching was always Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

- 9. What doctrines may be especially important to emphasize when you’re evangelizing someone who is familiar with the Bible, and perhaps considers himself or herself to be a Christian, but has not truly repented of sin and trusted in Christ for salvation? _____

- 10. Why should growing in our understanding of sound doctrine motivate us to evangelize more? ¹

¹ Adapted from Bobby Jamieson, *The Whole Truth about God: Biblical Theology*, ed. Mark Dever, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 29–36.