

FELLOWSHIP NOTES ~ Sunday, February 19th, 2023



Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

What is “Sound Doctrine”? Spiritually _____

Sound Doctrine is Important because...

1. Our faith is based on a specific message: _____ –
1 Corinthians 15:3-4
2. The gospel is a _____ – Jude 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:13
3. What we believe affects _____ – 1 Timothy 1:9-10
4. It is our truth compass in recognizing what is _____ – 1 John 4:1
5. It leads to _____, not _____ – 1 Timothy 4:16; Jude 1:4; Galatians 1:6-9
6. It encourages and builds up our _____ – Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 52:7; Titus 1:9

At the Tower in the Lobby:

- What We Believe Survey Results (separate adult and youth versions)
- What We Believe Survey Answer Key



225 North Avenue, Norwalk IA 50211 | (515) 981-0699 | www.fellowshipnorwalk.org

Growth Group Study Guide for February 19th – 26th

Getting Started

Group Discussion: Have you ever been swimming and feel like you were going to maybe drown? What did that feel like?

Digging Deeper

1. In Sunday's message, we looked at what sound doctrine is: healthy teaching. Why do you believe Christians today need the healthy teaching of the Word of God? What dangers are out there that we need sound doctrine?

2. On Sunday morning the illustration was given about a sailboat that capsized because it lost its ballast and became subject to the winds and waves of the ocean, it's skipper thrown into the water never to be seen again. Such is the vivid picture that can happen to us if we fail to cling to the ballast of the Word of God and the sound doctrines that it contains. READ Ephesians 4:14.

Here is how one commentator describes the impact of this verse:

One positive result from maturity in a believer is not being tricked by false teaching. Those who are "no longer children" can stand against lies and deceit. Paul's analogy of being "tossed to and fro by the waves" sounds like James 1:6, which instructs us to pray in faith without doubting. Jude 1:13 also uses the idea of "wild waves of the sea." The goal is to avoid being "carried about by every wind of doctrine." False teaching changes regularly. Those who are immature can easily be fooled into thinking false teaching is accurate.

This can take place in two ways. First, believers can be deceived by "human cunning." This is the power of human persuasion; a smooth talker can wield influence over others. Second, a person can be deceived by "craftiness in deceitful schemes." These are evil plans that may appear good but actually promote something false. In Ephesians 6:11 Paul will add that believers can "Put on the whole armor of God, that [they] may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

Can you give any examples of someone you've known who was "carried away" by the waves of false teaching? What happened?

3. Read and highlight the article below and discuss as a group.

The Five Tests of False Doctrine

T.D. Jakes says that God eternally exists in three manifestations, not three persons. Greg Boyd says God knows some aspects of the future, but that other future events are outside of his knowledge. Creflo Dollar says because we are created in the image of God, we are little gods. Mormonism says God revealed new scripture to Joseph Smith that supersedes the Bible. Roman Catholicism says we are justified by faith, but not by faith alone. This world is a murky madness of true and false. For every doctrine we know to be true, there seems to be a hundred pretenders.

No wonder, then, that John tells us to "test the spirits" and Paul says, "test everything" (1 John 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:21). It is our sacred responsibility to examine every doctrine to determine if it is true or false. But how can we distinguish sound doctrine from false? How can we distinguish teachers of truth from teachers of error? In our opening article, I said that putting a doctrine to the test is the best way to determine if it is true or false. As we test the doctrine, we learn our responsibility toward it: We either hold to it or we reject it. I am returning to those tests today to explain them in greater detail. They provide a grid that is useful for testing any doctrine.

Test 1: The Test of Origin

The first test is the test of origin. *Sound doctrine originates with God; false doctrine originates with someone or something created by God.* The Apostle Paul went to great lengths to convince the church in Galatia that the gospel he taught was not his own, but God's. "For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). Even Jesus was clear that he taught only what God had instructed him to teach: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (John 7:16). True doctrine originates with the God who is true (Titus 1:2).

It is this simple: Sound teaching originates with God and false teaching originates with men or demons.

Just as true doctrine is marked by its divine origin, false doctrine is marked by its worldly origin. Paul warned the Colossian church to avoid doctrine that is "according to human precepts and teachings" and told Timothy that some would "depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (Colossians 2:22, 1 Timothy 4:1). It is this simple: Sound teaching originates with God and false teaching originates with men or demons. When it comes to doctrine, if man made it, then we should not hold it. God is the Father of truth and Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44).

The test: Does this doctrine originate with God or has it been fabricated by someone or something else?

This leaves us with an obvious question: How can we know the origin of a doctrine? Sometimes its origin is obvious, but more often it is not. When we are uncertain, we can turn to our second test.

Test 2: The Test of Authority

The second test is the test of authority. *Sound doctrine grounds its authority within the Bible; false doctrine grounds its authority outside the Bible.* The Bible is God's inerrant, infallible, sufficient, complete, and authoritative revelation of himself to humanity. Doctrines that originate in the mind of God are recorded in the Word of God. There is a clear and necessary correlation between origin and authority, between God and his Word.

We can think here of those noble Bereans who "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). They knew that all doctrines must be compared to God's Word, his source of truth. Likewise, Paul praised the Thessalonians for their careful assessment and acceptance of his teaching because they understood its divine authority. "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Sound doctrine originates in the mind of God and is recorded in his authoritative self-revelation, the Bible.

The test: Does this doctrine appeal to the Bible for its authority? Or does it appeal to another scripture or another mind?

But a concern remains, because two teachers may both claim the authority of the Bible while teaching very different things. How can we know whose interpretation is correct? This is where we turn to the third test.

Test 3: The Test of Consistency

The third test is the test of consistency. *Sound doctrine is consistent with the whole of Scripture; false doctrine is inconsistent with some parts of Scripture.* There is a sameness or familiarity to true doctrine and a strangeness or unfamiliarity to false doctrine. The man who wrote the letter to the Hebrews warned his congregation about "diverse and strange teachings," while Paul warned Timothy about accepting "different doctrine" (Hebrews 13:9;

1 Timothy 1:3, 6:3). Both meant to emphasize that doctrine must always be compared to the established, accepted body of truth. Those who are knowledgeable about that body of truth will be in the best position to immediately identify and refute what is false.

Because there can be no contradiction in the mind of God, there can be no contradiction in the revelation of God.

This is tied to a key theological principle, “the analogy of faith,” which is often explained with the phrase “Scripture interprets Scripture.” If the Bible originates in the infallible mind of God, it must be consistent throughout. Because there can be no contradiction in the mind of God, there can be no contradiction in the revelation of God. What the Bible teaches in one place it cannot refute in another. Therefore, any true doctrine must be consistent with the whole of Scripture. Doctrine must never be treated in isolation, but always in light of a correct understanding of the entire Bible. Too many false teachers isolate verses or ideas that cannot withstand the scrutiny of the whole Book.

The test: Is this doctrine established or refuted by the entirety of Scripture?

Once we have tested doctrine and found it to be true, according to these three criteria, we can also see its soundness by its effects on us and those around us. That requires two more tests.

Test 4: The Test of Spiritual Growth

The fourth test is the test of spiritual growth. *Sound doctrine is beneficial for spiritual health; false doctrine leads to spiritual weakness.* After instructing Timothy, Paul told him, “If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained [“nourished”] in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed” (1 Timothy 4:6). Timothy had trained himself in the Bible and Christian doctrine. He had nourished himself in the truths he had been exposed to since he was a child. And he had never stopped. Through this continual nourishment, this ongoing dining on the Word of God, he had grown spiritually healthy and strong. He had accumulated a thorough knowledge of God and his Word. This is why Paul called him a “man of God” with “sincere faith” (1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 1:5). Timothy’s constant nourishment in sound doctrine from the Word of God made him the man he was.

Sound doctrine makes spiritually healthy, mature, knowledgeable Christians. False doctrine makes spiritually unhealthy, immature, ignorant Christians who may be no Christians at all.

Test 5: The Test of Godly Living

The fifth test is the test of godly living. *Sound doctrine has value for godly living, false doctrine leads to ungodly living.* Truth never stands on its own, but always has implications in life. Doctrine is always meant to lead to doxology, worship, and purposeful living. “All Scripture is breathed out by God,” says Paul, “and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Scripture is not to be known in an abstract sense, but intimately. It is to inform not only our minds, but our hearts and hands as well.

Truth has not been grasped until it has been lived.

Paul charged Titus to “teach what accords with sound doctrine,” reminding him that such doctrine is “excellent and profitable for people” (3:8, 2:1). “What accords with” sound doctrine is its far-reaching implications, the duties that flow out of it. Thus, sound doctrine has value. It is profitable in teaching us to live as we ought to live. It equips us to do those things that are good for our neighbor and that bring honor and glory to our God. Truth has not been grasped until it has been lived. Sound doctrine profits us by training us to live in a way that pleases God. False doctrine weakens us by training us to live in a way that dishonors God.

Evaluation: The Determination of Quality

At this point we simply take all of the evidence from the three tests and make a conclusion about the quality of the doctrine in question. *Sound doctrine originates with God, is recorded in the Word of God, is consistent with the whole revelation of God, and leads to both spiritual health and godly living. False doctrine originates with men or demons, is foreign to the Word of God, is inconsistent with the whole revelation of God, and leads to spiritual weakness and ungodly living.* It must pass all of the tests in order to be sound. If it fails one, it fails all of them. This word “sound” refers to health and appears often in the New Testament. For example, Paul instructed Timothy, “Follow the pattern of the sound [“healthy”] words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). To Titus he said, “Teach what accords with sound [“healthy”] doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

The task of the doctor is to evaluate a patient to declare him fit or unfit. The patient is fit when his whole body is functioning properly, free of disease. The task of the Christian is to evaluate every doctrine to declare it fit or unfit. John Stott says it characteristically well: “Christian doctrine is healthy in the same way as the human body is healthy. For Christian doctrine resembles the human body. It is a coordinated system consisting of different parts which relate to one another and together constitute a harmonious whole. If therefore our theology is maimed (with bits missing) or diseased (with bits distorted), it is not ‘sound’ or ‘healthy’.” Doctrine that passes the three tests is sound doctrine. It is pure and undefiled, true according to God’s unfailing standard of truth.

The evaluation: Based on the evidence, is this doctrine sound or false?

Action: Determine Your Responsibility

Having thoroughly tested the doctrine and examined its effects, we are able to determine how to respond to it. *Sound doctrine must be accepted and held fast; false doctrine must be denied and rejected.* When Jesus spoke to the believers in Thyatira, he commended them for clinging to truth and told them to “hold fast what you have until I come” (Revelation 2:25). Paul described the elder as a man who “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9).

Our responsibility is clear: We must accept and hold fast to what is true, and we must deny and reject what is false. Likewise, the church must welcome those who teach sound doctrine and rebuke those who do not. If they do not heed correction, the church must reject them, removing them and their influence (1 Corinthians 5:9).

In summary, true doctrine (content) originates with God (origin), is grounded in the Bible (authority), and agrees with the whole of Scripture (consistency). Because such doctrine is sound (quality), it is healthy (benefit), and profitable (value) for us, and we are responsible for holding it (responsibility).

False doctrine (content) originates with man (origin), is not grounded in the Bible (authority), and contradicts portions of Scripture (consistency). Because such doctrine is unsound (quality), it is unhealthy (benefit) and unprofitable (value) for us, and we are responsible for rejecting it (responsibility).

Conclusion:

In what ways did the above article help your thinking in regard to sound doctrine/false teaching and teachers?

Wrapping Up

Pray that Fellowship Church will grow stronger in the sound doctrine of the Word of God so that we can stand against the increasing false teachers and teaching in our world today.