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# WE ARE THE CHURCH

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## Marks of a Healthy Church

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### *BIBLE-SHAPED THINKING*

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A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter  
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on January 14, 2018

#### INTRODUCTION

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Don't you love Christian doctrine? What?! You don't get excited about doctrine? If you are like most Christians in the Western world, then you probably don't have a high or adoring view of doctrine. But doctrine is the life-blood of a healthy local church, and thus it is the substance of every healthy Christian. Doctrine, when it is sound, is stabilizing, invigorating, and nourishing. In this message, we shall consider sound doctrine as a mark or feature of a healthy local church. May God help us be healthier and more faithful as we seek to love and know Him well.

## PASSAGE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to a young pastor/elder, named Titus. Titus was not only a pastor himself, he was also tasked with the job of raising up pastors for several local churches in Crete. The instructions and admonitions Paul gives to Titus provide a sobering picture of pastoral responsibility.

Furthermore, the pastoral example is to be followed and applied by every Christian. In fact, Paul's instructions to Titus are explicitly extended to every demographic of the Christian community.

## MESSAGE MADE SIMPLE

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*“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine...”* (Titus 2:1).

Doctrine is probably not a word you've used in the last several weeks, and it is not likely a word you intended on using anytime soon. However, doctrine is more familiar to you that you might realize.

The word “doctrine” means “teaching,” or “principles,” or maybe even “creed.” Your doctrine is the stuff you have learned and now believe as true and useful for life. Your doctrines might include mathematic rules, guidelines for logical reasoning, and truisms that keep you on the right track. “An apple a day keeps the doctor away” is an example of a doctrinal truism. We know that apples aren't magic, but eating an appropriate amount of fruits and vegetables will help us be healthier.

Christian doctrines are summary statements of what the Bible teaches. Christian doctrine, when it is sound, is faithful to the Bible and useful for Christian living. While many people might see the study of doctrine as a dry exercise reserved for some intellectual bookworms, it is actually the life-blood of a healthy local church.

Pastors are to teach sound doctrine, every Christian is to learn sound doctrine, and every Christian is responsible to pass sound doctrine on to those who are coming after them. In so doing, Christians will live faithfully to the glory of God.

## **TITUS 2:1-10 (ESV)**

1 But as for you, *teach what accords with sound doctrine.*

2 *Older men* are to be sober-minded, dignified, *self-controlled, sound in faith,* in love, and in steadfastness.

3 *Older women* likewise are to be *reverent in behavior,* not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to *teach what is good,* 4 and so *train the young women* to love their husbands and children, 5 to be *self-controlled,* pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

6 Likewise, urge the *younger men* to be *self-controlled.*

7 Show *yourself* in all respects to be a *model of good works,* and in your *teaching* show integrity, dignity, 8 and *sound speech* that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

9 Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may *adorn the doctrine of God* our Savior.

## **THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY**

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**Healthy churches are continually shaped by sound doctrine.**

## MESSAGE OUTLINE

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**(1) THE BIBLE OFFERS US TWO WAYS TO LIVE**

**(2) DOCTRINE IS THE STUFF OF BIBLE-SHAPED THINKING**

**(3) ALL DISCIPLES ARE RESPONSIBLE LEARNERS**

**(4) APPLICATION: 4 OBJECTIONS & 2 CAUTIONS**

### (1) THE BIBLE OFFERS US TWO WAYS TO LIVE

- **Psalm 1** (blessed vs wicked/dead)
  - “***Blessed is the man*** who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but ***his delight is in the law of the LORD***, and ***on his law he meditates*** day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that ***yields its fruit in its season***, and its ***leaf does not wither***. In all that he does, he prospers. The ***wicked*** are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the ***wicked will not stand in the judgment***, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but ***the way of the wicked will perish***.”
    - Friends, do you delight in the law of God? His instructions, rules, and commands?
    - Do you know that many of God’s laws and rules are for New Testament Christians too?
    - Are you deeply rooted in the water of God’s words, or are you a bit dehydrated this morning?
  
- **Proverbs 1** (wise listeners vs simple fools)
  - “The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ***To know wisdom*** and instruction, ***to understand*** words of insight, to ***receive instruction*** in ***wise*** dealing, in ***righteousness, justice, and equity***; to ***give prudence*** to the simple, ***knowledge*** and ***discretion*** to the youth— ***Let the wise hear*** and ***increase in learning***, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. ***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction***.  
  
***Hear***, my son, your father’s ***instruction***, and forsake not your mother’s ***teaching***, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. My son, ***if sinners entice you, do not consent***...

**20 Wisdom cries aloud in the street**, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. **Because I have called and you refused to listen**, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, **I also will laugh at your calamity**; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. **Then they will call upon me**, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. **Because they hated knowledge** and **did not choose the fear of the LORD**, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore **they shall eat the fruit of their way**, and have their fill of their own devices. For **the simple are killed by their turning away**, and **the complacency of fools destroys them**; but **whoever listens to me will dwell secure** and will **be at ease**, without dread of disaster.”

- Do you fear (*revere, honor, sit under the authority of*) God?
- Do you listen to God’s teaching and seek to apply it to your life?
- Or is your plan to seek God’s help and instruction AFTER things start to fall apart?
- “***the complacency of fools destroys them***; but ***whoever listens to me will dwell secure...***”

- **Passionate Activity doesn’t equal Christian Living**

- Using a wrench to hammer a nail
- New Year’s resolution Gym enthusiasts
- A lady ate only 1 Jr. burger a day for more than 2 years
  
- Passionate, dedicated, sincere activity does not equal Christian living
- We need some kind of standard or rule or instruction

Summary: The two options are as follows:

- (1) Diligently learn and apply God's words (*i.e. Bible-Shaped Thinking*)
- (2) Foolishly do this whole thing on your own (*i.e. Experience-based, Rationalistic, Philosophical, Pragmatic, or some other kind of Thinking*)

(Segue) *Bible-Shaped Thinking is comprised of Doctrine.*

## **(2) DOCTRINE IS THE STUFF OF BIBLE-SHAPED THINKING**

- What is doctrine?

- Bobby Jamieson – Sound Doctrine is “a **summary of the Bible's teaching that is both faithful to the Bible and useful for life.**”
  - Let's try to digest that... in three bites.

### ***1. Doctrine is a summary of the Bible's teaching***

#### ***(3 theology streams)***

1. Biblical theology – the stories or themes of our family
  - A. Noah and the Ark – salvation through judgment
  - B. The Exodus – God's saving power and intention
  - C. God's faithfulness despite His people's disobedience
  - D. The culmination of all in Christ
2. Historical theology – the heritage or traditions of our family
  - How has biblical teaching been handed down to us?
  - Who are those Christians from whom we enjoy such a heritage?
  - How did they wrestle with hard questions about the Bible and its teaching?

3. Systematic theology – the doctrines or vocabulary of our family
- Summary statements of biblical concepts:
    - **Who is Jesus?**
      - *Hypostatic Union* – Jesus is the God/man
    - **How are sinners saved?**
      - *Justification* – God makes guilty sinners legally holy in His sight
    - **What is a Christian/disciple?**
      - *Christian* – spiritually alive believer in Christ, who makes a life of following Christ as Lord
  - Friends, ***are you ready to summarize the Bible’s teaching*** on a subject for your ***non-Christian friend?***
    - ***If you are a non-Christian here, I want to apologize*** for any encounter you might have had a Christian who did not listen well to your questions or even try to give you reasonable answers...
  - ***Are you ready to help your Christian*** brother or sister understand the Bible’s teaching better?
    - ***If you are an inquisitive Christian here, I want to apologize*** to you as well, if you have been sorely disappointed by other Christians’ dismissive and shallow response to your theological inquiry.
  - If you are not a ready summarizer and explainer of the Bible’s teaching, why not?
    - ***“always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”*** (1 Peter 3:15).

## 2. Doctrine is faithful to the Bible

- It's not just a summary, it is faithful to what the Bible teaches
  - **Systematic theology** – we don't press a paradox so far that we turn it into a contradiction
  - **Biblical theology** – we don't look for a theme so hard that we begin to see everything in one color (colorblind)
  - **Historical theology** – we don't romanticize any period or character, and we don't force our worldview onto them
- **We always let the Bible inform and reform our doctrine**
  - Friends, does your theological system create a lot of anomalies out of the Bible passages you read?
  - Do you avoid looking at the warts of your Christian heroes?

## 3. Doctrine is useful for life

- Doctrinal truths may not seem immediately applicable, but every single doctrine IS!
  - Doctrine: God creates from Himself and for His glory;
    - Life: Therefore, I should generously give my time, treasure, and talent away for His glory.
  - Rationale (in 1, 2, 3)
    1. God creates from Himself and for His glory – “**by him [God the Son] all things were created... all things were created through him and for him**” (Col. 1:16).
    2. My time, treasure, and talent are from Him and for His glory
      - **My time is from Him and for His glory: “In His hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind”** (Job 12:10).

- ***My treasure is from Him and for His glory:***  
*“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for **all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours**. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. **Both riches and honor come from you**, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and **in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all**” (1 Chron. 29:11-12).*
  - ***My talent is from Him and for His glory:*** *“A person cannot receive **even one thing unless it is given him from heaven**” (Jn. 3:27).*
3. Therefore, I should generously give my time, treasure, and talent away for God’s glory...
- ***Because He has created me and given these to me for that purpose.***

**Summary: Doctrine is the stuff of Bible-Shaped Thinking; and, therefore, it is fundamental to Christian living.**

- Friends, have you been avoiding doctrine?
- Do you diligently study the Scriptures and think about how to summarize the teaching you find there?
- Do you know that this is THE WAY you learn how to live rightly/faithfully before God?
- ***“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?*** How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you” (Prov. 1:22-23).

**(Segue) You see... All disciples are responsible learners.**

### (3) ALL DISCIPLES ARE RESPONSIBLE LEARNERS

- **Healthy Churches have pastors/elders who teach sound doctrine.**
  - “as for *you*, *teach what accords* with *sound doctrine*” (v1)
    - healthy instruction according to the Bible
    - as opposed to “*empty talking*” (1:10), “*deceptive talking*” (1:10), “*talking for personal gain*” (1:11), or talking that doesn’t line up with one’s behavior (1:16)
  
- **Healthy Churches have older men who are learners and teachers.**
  - “*Older men* are to be *sober-minded*, dignified, *self-controlled*, *sound in faith*, in love, and in steadfastness” (v2)
    - sober-minded and self-controlled are both referring to the kind of living that is controlled by something other than impulse, feelings, or mere desire.
    - What is it that should control “older men” from outside themselves? SOUND DOCTRINE – Christ’s Word is more trustworthy than my thoughts/feelings!
  - Those older men who do this well should “*urge the younger men to*” to do the same... “be *self-controlled*” (v6).
    - Mature Christian disciples should teach immature ones!
  
- **Healthy Churches have older women who are learners and teachers.**
  - “*Older women* likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They *are to teach* what is good, 4 and so *train* the young women...” (v3-4)
    - The same is true of “older women.”
    - How do we know what “*is good*”? How do we define “*reverent behavior*?”
    - “sound doctrine” (i.e. biblical instruction) shapes everything!
  - Those older women who know what is good are to train the younger.

- **Healthy Churches have younger women who are learners.**
  - “...**train the young women**...” (v3)
    - Younger women should look to the more mature believers around them to gain wisdom and instruction.
    - All of this is not merely “old wives’ tales”
    - The responsibility is to learn sound doctrine and how to live out the implications thereof.
  
- **Healthy Churches have younger men who are learners.**
  - “**urge the younger men to be self-controlled**” (v6)
    - The same is true for younger men.
    - No one must be ruled by his passions and/or desires!
    - Faithful Christianity is taking even our thoughts as prisoners under the rule and reign of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)!
    - How much more so our words and deeds (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17)?!
  
- **Healthy Churches are full of learners who seek to adorn doctrine.**
  - “**so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine** of God our Savior” (v10)
    - Paul does not think in terms of pitting **doctrinal learning** against **faithful living**.
    - Here, we see that the two are inextricably linked.

## (4) APPLICATION: 4 OBJECTIONS & 2 CAUTIONS

- 4 Objections:

- 1. **Doctrine Divides.**

- **Of course, it does... it must!**

- We believe God created all things in the beginning from nothing.
      - We believe God gave moral commands and holds all people accountable to obey them.
      - We believe all people everywhere are guilty, apart from Christ.
      - We believe Jesus God's Son and the only Savior.
      - We believe Jesus will come again one day to bring swift judgment upon all sinners and reward to those who look to Him for refuge.

- 2. **I'm not a reader, studier, or intellectual.**

- **Would this objection seem wise if you were speaking to God?**

- Please here my heart today...
      - I am not saying, "*I think you should study doctrine.*"
      - I am saying, "*the Bible commands every Christian to be a learner of doctrine.*"
      - You are not required to learn as much as another, but you have to stand before God and answer for how much time and effort you gave to knowing Him.
        - Do what you can with what you have!

- 3. **Surely, we shouldn't expect everyone to be a theologian.**

- **Everyone is a theologian already!**

- Who is Jesus? What is a Christian? How can we know God?
      - You are a theologian! You are probably just not a good one.

#### 4. I thought the grace of Christ is free... This sounds like legalism.

- **Christ frees us to obey, not to be lazy and presumptuous!**

- Of course, grace is free! But what shall we do in response?
- Are you really going to say...?
  - *“Jesus is the most important thing in my life because He saves me out of sheer grace; therefore, I don’t think it is right for me to diligently seek to know and obey Him well.”*
  - Because the grace of Christ is free... we want to lovingly obey this supremely gracious King!

- **2 Cautions:**

##### 1. Let’s understand theological triage.

- **In essential doctrines, we must be united.**
  - Essential to the Gospel
  - EX: God is triune. Jesus Christ is God and the Son of God...
- **In secondary doctrines, we (local church) must lovingly strive towards unity.**
  - Not essential to the Gospel, but necessary for local church
  - EX: Baptism is by immersion and only for believers
- **In tertiary doctrines, we must patiently allow for growth**
  - Not essential to the Gospel or local church membership
  - EX: Christ’s return will be before the millennium or after the millennium. Or the language of “millennium” is not to be taken literally at all.

- In *adiaphora*, we must graciously apply doctrine wisely
  - Neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture
  - EX: How big or small should your home be?
    - How many kids should you have?
    - Should you homeschool, send your kids to private school, or enroll them in public school?
    - Should you sit close to the preacher or far away?

## 2. Let's seek to adorn doctrine well.

- “*Show yourself* in all respects to be a *model of good works*, and in your teaching *show integrity, dignity*, and *sound speech* that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, *having nothing evil to say about us*” (v7-8)

**Major Point:** Healthy churches are continually shaped by sound doctrine.

### SUGGESTED RESOURCES

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*The 9 Marks of a Healthy Church* by Various

<https://www.9marks.org/about/>

*The Training Ground of Sound Doctrine* by Tim Challies

<https://www.challies.com/articles/the-training-ground-of-sound-doctrine/>

*When Should Doctrine Divide* by Gavin Ortlund

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/when-should-doctrine-divide/>

*Non-Doctrinal Christianity is Impossible* by R. Scott Clark

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/non-doctrinal-christianity-impossible/>

*Absolute Necessity of Sound Doctrine* by R.K. McGregor Wright

[http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/rkm\\_wright/rkm\\_wright.sound.doctrine.html](http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/rkm_wright/rkm_wright.sound.doctrine.html)