

Why It Matters What You Believe

Isaiah 55:10-11 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Bad information is toxic. The wrong information will eventually poison the entire system. This principle of toxicity is behind how pesticides work. An herbicide kills because it is a hormone that gives the plant bad information. It tells the plant to grow faster than its capacity to absorb nutrients allows, and it literally grows itself to death because its information base is wrong. And yet, to the casual observer nothing looks amiss for some time – until death inevitably occurs.

One of the toxic ideas now in vogue in Christian circles runs like this: “It doesn’t matter WHAT you believe, it only matters WHO you believe in.” Its proponents would have us believe that the greatest accomplishment of Christianity in the last thirty years has been the demolition of doctrinal distinctives in favor of “unity.” Could it be that someone has been fed some toxic information?

False doctrine is a spiritual herbicide. Individuals that ingest it think they are still growing spiritually, never realizing that they have been fed toxic information. But true doctrine liberates every soul that obeys it. It is a supernatural fertilizer that brings real growth and transformation through the power of God.

The word “doctrine” occurs in 50 verses of the King James Version of the Bible and always means, “the substance of something taught.”

The gospel writers repeatedly record that the crowds were astonished at Jesus’ doctrine – not because its style was exceptional but because its substance was supernatural. He taught with anointed authority! Bible doctrine is more than just a musty subject for stuffy theologians; it is the very substance of our faith.

Doctrine must always be distinguished from dogma. Dogma is MAN’S STATEMENT of truth, as set forth in a creed, but doctrine is GOD’S REVELATION of truth, as set forth in the Scriptures. That is why Bible doctrine has supernatural power when it is believed.

The Apostle Paul prophesied that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine,” (2 Timothy 4:3) and no generation fulfills this Scripture better than ours. Many churches have rejected doctrinal preaching as harsh, unloving, and even obsolete. But in doing so, they have unwittingly joined the ranks of those “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” (2 Timothy 3:5)

THREE DEFINITIONS OF DOCTRINE:

1. DOCTRINE IS LIKE YEAST

- Yeast works silently and secretly, eventually influencing the whole lump of dough (whether false or true).
- Matthew 16:6, 12 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees ... Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

2. DOCTRINE IS LIKE WIND

- False doctrines can uproot believers like strong winds can uproot trees (Psalm 1:4). True doctrines can affect an entire society when they are demonstrated by believers.
- George Barna: “Unless a group is 20% different than its surrounding society, it cannot impact that society.”
- Ephesians 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

3. DOCTRINE IS LIKE RAIN

- Rain is symbolic of revival, refreshing and restoration after a time of drought or famine.
- Bible doctrine is heaven-sent teaching! You cannot have a real move of God without it!
- Deuteronomy 32:2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:
- Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

THREE DIFFERENCES DOCTRINE MAKES:

1. CHARACTER – WHAT WE ARE

The power of the gospel to transform a life is not activated until a person obeys the doctrine “once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3)

Romans 6:17-18 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of **DOCTRINE** which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (**Romans 6:17-18**)

2. BEHAVIOR – WHAT WE DO

A heart that is obedient to Bible doctrine will always “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:10) through an obvious lifestyle of godliness and holiness.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the **DOCTRINE** which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself

3. DESTINY – WHERE WE GO

Our eternal destiny hangs on the doctrine we choose to believe. Far from being a “non-issue,” our obedience to Bible doctrine is the central issue in receiving salvation.

1 Timothy 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the **DOCTRINE**; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

THREE DEMANDS DOCTRINE MAKES:

1. DOCTRINE DEMANDS PURITY

- The only true test for the purity of teaching is the purity of life it produces.
- **Job 11:4** For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.
- **Matthew 7:20-21** Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

2. DOCTRINE DEMANDS LOVE

- The converts at Pentecost continued first in doctrine and second in fellowship (Acts 2:42).
- The measure of common light between believers will determine their measure of fellowship.
- Some wrongly sacrifice fellowship for doctrine; others wrongly sacrifice doctrine for fellowship!
- Though all our doctrine is exactly right, if we do not have love we are nothing in God’s sight.
- **1 Corinthians 13:2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
- However, the highest degree of “love” will never negate the need for obedience to doctrine!

3. DOCTRINE DEMANDS OBEDIENCE

- We never really understand truth until we obey truth! Doctrine is lifeless until it is practiced.
- Bible doctrines have no effect on your life whatsoever unless they are obeyed!
- Jesus warned us in Matthew 23:3 to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees because “they say and do not.” Preaching without practicing becomes a lifeless form!
- Paul could say in 2 Timothy 3:10, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life ...” because his lifestyle was consistent with the doctrine he preached.

The greatest danger in handling doctrine is that it may become truth apart from experience.

Truth that is not lived is powerless truth. Truth unlived is the greatest waste in the world!

Someone asked Sis. Bobbye Wendell, the first missionary to Ethiopia, what their national ministers would say if asked what brought great revival in that country. Her answer? **“Doctrine. Doctrine. Doctrine.”**