**Is Doctrine a Dirty Word?**

A lot of people think the cause of all the division in the religious world is a preoccupation with doctrine. Some who call themselves Christians will say, “If we just spent more time focusing on Jesus instead of doctrine, we would be better off.” Are they right? Could we focus on our shared admiration for Jesus of Nazareth, ignore differences in understanding of His teachings and achieve a unity with which He would be pleased?

The Greek word translated doctrine simply meant teaching. The Scriptures obviously condemn false teaching, but the whole idea of minimizing the importance of the teachings of Christ is nonsense. Jesus said, “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am” (John 13:13). He also asked a rhetorical question that each of us who claim to be His disciples must ponder carefully: “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, “Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). It is impossible to be devoted to Jesus Christ without striving to understand and live by His teachings (doctrine).

The problem is not a concern for doctrine. The problem is that some of the doctrines that are being promoted are sound (healthy) and some are unsound (unhealthy), the difference being the source of the teaching. Jesus once asked the Jewish leaders, “The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?” (Matthew 21:25). Any doctrine you may hear was either revealed to us by God or it came from the mind of man. Folks who formulate doctrine from their own precepts render their own worship vain (Matthew 15:9). Sound doctrine is that important.

1 Corinthians chapter 2 makes it clear where sound doctrine comes from. The Holy Spirit searched the mind of God and revealed the things we need to know to inspired men. Those men taught and wrote down the will of God. Now when we read what they wrote, we can understand their insights (Ephesians 3:3-4). The bottom line: All truth upon which Christians everywhere should be united is found in the pages of God’s word (John 17:17).

Paul warned of false teachers in his first letter to the young preacher Timothy, and he enumerated the sources of their distorted ideas. In chapter 1 verse 4, they were relying on myths, endless genealogies and speculation. They engaged in fruitless discussion (v.6). They were influenced by deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (4:1) and worldly fables (v.7). They put their trust in false “knowledge” (6:20). Do any of these sound familiar?

Jesus stated clearly that each of us will one day be judged by His teachings (John 12:48), not the opinions, speculations and teachings of men. Commit yourself to learning and understanding the teachings of Scripture and stand united with others who share your commitment. Your relationship with God depends on your determination to stand firm in the doctrine of His Son (2 John 1:9).

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