

Bible Doctrine Divides, as Well It Should

One of the questions I often hear about is "Why can't all churches just get together?" I assure them that this is not really a good idea. While they might think that all we have to do is love each other, there is much more that goes on in churches that has to be taken into consideration. It wouldn't take long before you discover that trying to administrate such an organization is impossible. We would discover that there are so many doctrinal differences that you would have to give up to accommodate beliefs that would run afoul of God.

1. Grieving God -

Not everything that goes on in church is alright just because we are praising and glorifying God. Besides our human sinfulness, we presume that doing *anything* in the name of God makes it alright. As usual, with definitions, when someone talks about praising and glorifying God, we have to ask what that means. If praising God means copying the world to pump up an emotional experience, then it is not glorifying God. We are warned about grieving God. We need to develop a sense of what God is passionate about but also what frustrates and grieves Him.

Eph 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Ge 6:6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Ps 95:10 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

As we develop that sense of passion,

it will change our lives and motivate us. This is what drives so much of advertising and political campaigns. Commercials try create a sense of dissatisfaction in us and then they try to show how their product or plan can meet that need. Politicians will try to play upon the our selfish desires to get our votes. Even children have learned that when they complain passionately we will take action.

We *do* need to develop a passion and frustration for what we see happening in our culture so that we will be moved to serve God. However, it is not enough to become passionate. The Jews in Christ's day were passionate. In fact, they had a whole political philosophy called the Zealots. They viewed the Romans as oppressors and were willing to use violent means to resist and expel them from Judea. They engaged in guerrilla warfare, assassinations, and uprisings to achieve their objectives. One of their most notorious factions, the Sicarii, was known for its targeted killings of Jews who were seen as collaborators with the Romans. All of this can be seen in modern day protests. They were motivated by an apocalyptic belief that their struggle against the Romans would bring about the coming of the Messiah. They were religious and wanted to glorify God, but we can be sure that their kind of religion grieved God.

2. Rightly dividing the Word of Truth -

The problem is not just that we should be passionate, but passionate *according to knowledge*.

Ro 10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

It is because of this that we emphasize not just *reading* the Bible and not just *studying* the Bible but studying the Bible *according to knowledge*. This goes a step further than studying. It involves analysis, interpretation, and reflection. It involves a sense of *knowledgeable organizing* with a

thorough understanding of context, theology, or deeper meaning.

2Tim 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Rightly dividing refers to how we organize our understanding of the Bible. For instance, we might read about how we should pray for the desires of our heart and very easily misinterpret the passage to suggest that we can pray according to our lusts. Rightly dividing the Word of God would be to go through the Bible and combine other verses that teach we have to do all to the glory of God. We must pray as we obey His commandments according to our love *for* God. We must pray according to God's will. *That* is what we call the doctrine of prayer.

3. The Bible and the importance of doctrine -

The Bible has a lot to say about the importance of doctrine.

- Doctrine was important to Jesus.

Jn 7:16-17 Jesus answered them, and said, **My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.**

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself.

Mk 11:18 And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was **astonished at his doctrine.**

Matt 15:8-9 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, **teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.**

- Doctrine was important for the ministry.

The apostle Paul emphasized the importance of doctrine for the ministry. In fact, almost every book he wrote was about doctrine.

1Ti 4:6-7 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of **good doctrine**, whereunto thou hast attained.

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness.

1Ti 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to **doctrine**.

1Ti 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.

Titus 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

- Doctrine was important for understanding the Bible

2Tim 3:16-17 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* **profitable for doctrine**, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

4. Doctrine divides, as well it should!

Some have said, "Doctrine divides but love unites," as if it is a noble excuse for doing away with doctrine. Their argument continues, "God is love. It is man who made doctrine." Their

argument is false merely because it is so wrong in its premise. God is love and, as we have already seen, doctrine is important to Him. Man has made *some* bad doctrine, but they have not made *all* doctrine. Our love must be tempered by knowledge or else we will fall into a completely different error.

- Doctrine unites while love can divide

Mt 10:34-38 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

36 And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Actually love can divide and doctrine will unite! If you love father, or mother or other family more than Christ it will divide you from Christ. When we unite on truth then we are truly united.

- There can be no loving each other without knowledge.

This is true in church.

Php 1:9-10 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

This is true in a loving marriage.

1Pe 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands,

dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

There can be no working together without knowledge

Am 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

2Co 6:14-18 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2Jn 9-11 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the **doctrine of Christ**, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed:

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Have you ever seen how what is called love can actually turn you into an enabler? Love that doesn't confront is not love.

5. False doctrine robs you of power and life -

 - Pastors are given to make us strong in doctrine.

Eph 4:11-15 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

- We are robbed of strength by false doctrine.

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;

- We need truth from God to be strong together.

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

- Doctrine matters

Chris Wallace interviewed Joel Osteen back in 2007.

WALLACE: And what about Mitt Romney? And I've got to ask you the question, because it is a question whether it should be or not in this campaign, is a

Mormon a true Christian?

OSTEEN: Well, in my mind they are. Mitt Romney has said that he believes in Christ as his savior, and that's what I believe, so, you know, I'm not the one to judge the little details of it. So I believe they are.

And so, you know, Mitt Romney seems like a man of character and integrity to me, and I don't think he would — anything would stop me from voting for him if that's what I felt like.

WALLACE: So, for instance, when people start talking about Joseph Smith, the founder of the church, and the golden tablets in upstate New York, and God assumes the shape of a man, do you not get hung up in those theological issues?

OSTEEN: I probably don't get hung up in them because I haven't really studied them or thought about them. And you know, I just try to let God be the judge of that. I mean, I don't know.

I certainly can't say that I agree with everything that I've heard about it, but from what I've heard from Mitt, when he says that Christ is his savior, to me that's a common bond.

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,318054,00.html> 2008-03-02

The reason this example of Joel Osteen is so bad is because he assumes that Romney is a Christian. He doesn't get "hung up" on the theological heresies of Romney's Mormon beliefs. He doesn't even know that Romney's Mormon belief in Christ as savior means that we can be exalted and become gods ourselves. Making people comfortable in Mormon theology is not salvation. Osteen will be accountable for his idle words.

Matt 12:36-37 But I say unto you, That every idle word that

men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Good doctrine is what will help us divide ourselves from churches that fall into error.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit will affect how you pray as He convicts you and delivers understanding to you, not give you some unintelligible gibberish

The Doctrine Sin will give understanding what *God* calls righteousness, not our own convenient righteousness which falls short; it will help you avoid the idea of mortal and venial sin, or incomplete idea of sin, which will make you feel comfortable that you aren't so bad after all.

The Doctrine of the Church will give understanding of God's organization of church that will keep people working together and be "like-minded"

The Doctrine of Last Things will help you avoid the mistake that the Thessalonians which caused them to quit working (believe me, it still happens today!)

The Doctrine of the Bible will help you avoid having the wrong idea about the Bible that will cause you to abuse it to your own ends as if you could read into it and out of it what you want.

The Doctrine of Christ will help you avoid the Unitarian idea that Jesus is not God and has no power; it will help you identify the hoax that makes Jesus and Satan brothers or that God was once a man.

The Doctrine of Man will help you understand why we still sin

The Doctrine of Salvation will get you saved by faith instead of by works and keep you from

being stuck in a never ending effort to appease God by works

There are so many false doctrines than people are even aware of. The emerging church, deconstructionism, ancient futurism, pre wrath rapture, tri-trinitariansim, the gospel of prosperity, the liberation gospel, the list can go on and on about what is attacking the church doctrinally and why we should know what we do and don't believe.

Of the many factors that produced the Nazi holocaust and World War II, one of the most important was Darwin's notion that evolutionary progress occurs mainly as a result of the elimination of the weak in the s t r u g g l e f o r survival...Darwinism-inspired eugenics clearly played a critical role. Darwinism justified and encouraged the Nazi views on both race and war.

E x p u n g i n g t h e Judeo-Christian doctrine of the divine origin of humans from mainline German (liberal) theology and its schools, and replacing it with Darwinism, openly contributed to the acceptance of Social Darwinism that culminated in the tragedy of the holocaust.

— b a s e d o n
<http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/v13/i2/nazi.asp>

- Jesus is the only way.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Contradictory ideas cannot exist together. It is either Jesus *or* Mohammed. You must either deny Jesus *or* deny Mohammed. They cannot both be true and they cannot both be false. One must be true and the other false. Jesus *or* Buddha. Jesus *or* Lao-tze. Jesus

or L. Ron Hubbard. Jesus *or* the Dalai Lama. Jesus does not allow for the possibility of another savior. Why can we not merely deny both? You cannot *afford* to deny both. Your heaven and hell depend on what you do with Jesus and all others.

We *must* come to a conclusion.

We *cannot* believe the others because they are not substantiated with prophecy.

We *must* not believe the others because they lead to death.

- A word of caution

At this point, I have to offer a word of caution. Something that has been historically true of Baptists is the autonomy of the believer. This means that each believer is ultimately responsible for his own beliefs. I doubt that there are two believers who have *exactly* 100% agreement with each other. As Ed Koch used to say, "If you agree with me on 7 out of 10 issues, vote for me. If you agree on 10 out of 10 you should have your head examined!" Nonetheless, there are some churches that have so much heresy that they can't be considered Christian at all. There are *non-negotiable differences* that would exclude fellowship between churches, such as the deity of Christ, the full inspiration of the Bible, and salvation by faith alone. There are other things that make it *impractical* for churches to work together. They might be our Christian brothers but they have *honest* arguments about the *exact* interpretation of the Bible. Having fellowship with them is very possible, but joining in with them would raise too many arguments about how to work together. Then there are those who we *can* work with even though you have to exercise a little grace. This is more of an art than science. This actually includes people in your own church. The bottom line is that we shouldn't assume that anyone who is not *exactly* like us is a heretic.

1Cor 16:13-14 Watch ye, stand

fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

14 Let all your things be done with charity.

6. Spiritual doldrums -

Our spiritual lives are left in the doldrums with no wind to our sail because of unwillingness to move beyond *simple* doctrine.

We are happy to be left in a dark doctrinal netherworld because

- We fear study
- We fear confrontation
- We fear not being able to come to satisfactory conclusions
- We fear losing an argument
- We fear man rather than God

2Tim 3:16-17 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Scripture is profitable for doctrine and reproof. Not just reproof of our sinful ways, but of sinful doctrine. We attempt not only to teach what the doctrines of the Bible, but we also examine the *reasons* why we must be passionate about our faith.

There are those who are only looking for a *spiritual experience* when they come to church. These are the ones who are most susceptible to cults, false preachers, and superstition. Such false preachers seek to fleece the flock, not lead the flock. Such people are fans of Jesus they have created. They are not brothers of Jesus.

There are those who will exaggerate one aspect of doctrine out of context. They create a social gospel of feeding the poor while they are on their way to Hell without the Gospel of salvation in Christ.

Doctrine unites those who are of like faith and divides those who are not.

If you have not asked Jesus to be your Savior, especially because you have not had the doctrine of Salvation explained to you, understand that He wants to take your eternal punishment of Hell that you deserve because you are a sinner. He wants to take your past and future sin and pay for it with His suffering on the cross. When you ask Him in prayer, He will do it at that moment. You can have confidence in this because we are taught this from God's Holy Bible.

We need to know Scripture in context to have a full body of doctrine. We need to know how we are saved so that we have an informed faith, not an emotional experience. If someone asked you how you became a Christian, could you actually explain it? You might have had a concern that you needed to have taken care of before you got saved. However, there are many other concerns that stop people. Do you have enough doctrine to be able to help take care of those concerns? Will you become a student of the Bible?

1. Grieving God - Eph 4:30, Ge 6:6, Ps 95:10
2. Rightly dividing the Word of Truth - Ro 10:2, 2Tim 2:15
3. The Bible and the importance of doctrine Jn 7:16-17, Mk 11:18, Matt 15:8-9, 1Ti 4:6-7, 4:13, 16, Titus 1:9, 2Tim 3:16-17
4. Doctrine divides, as well it should! Mt 10:34-38, Php 1:9-10, 1Pe 3:7, Am 3:3, 2Co 6:14-18, 2Jn 9-11
5. False doctrine robs you of power and life - Eph 4:11-15, Matt 12:36-37, John 14:6, 1Cor 16:13-14
6. Spiritual doldrums - 2Tim 3:16-17