

# Good Doctrine

Today we are diving in and comparing good doctrine with bad doctrine and how we can tell the difference between them.

## Introduction

A couple of weeks ago we posted a graphic on social media that said, "Scripture should dictate doctrine. Doctrine should look for supporting scripture." That sure generated some comments and emails. We wanted to take today and talk more about good doctrine and compare it to bad doctrine and then give you some tools to test these doctrinal beliefs you hear and read.

## Doctrine Is

Before we can talk about comparing good doctrine to bad doctrine we need to know what doctrine is. There are many names used in the church for doctrine. You will see things like *Statement of Faith* or *Core Beliefs*. Sometimes you will read or hear someone talk about *Foundational Truths* or *Scriptural Assertions*. Regardless of what they are called doctrines are beliefs or principles deeply held and defended by a group or organization. In our case, we are talking about church doctrine and you can read the [Cell Life Church Statement of Faith](#) on our website.

Typical doctrinal statements refer to the deity of Jesus Christ, origin and inerrancy of scripture, the role of the Church, and salvation. Many denominations combine or separate predominantly the same doctrinal statements with the same scriptural references just in slightly different ways or terms. We are not going to split hairs with this teaching today. We are talking about comparing good doctrine to bad doctrine and giving you tools to differentiate between them.

## Good Doctrine vs. Bad Doctrine

We must test doctrine and determine if it is good or bad. As our post said, good doctrine is sourced in scripture. Bad doctrine is a belief or thought that is often sourced in the mind of man and then scripture is sought out to support that belief. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

### 2 Timothy 3:16-17

(16) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (17) so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Scripture must be the source of our beliefs and doctrines. We cannot come up with ideas for beliefs and doctrines and then go looking for scripture to support that idea. This is very dangerous and leads people to pick out pieces of scripture and take them out of context to prove their point and support their belief.

Oftentimes bad doctrine is used to control people or lead them down a path of destruction. This is one of the chief methods the devil uses to confuse mankind and get us to shift our focus away from Jesus and onto ourselves. Good doctrine is scripturally focused on Jesus and bad doctrine is focused on the individual, control of the individual, or to justify actions. Let's look at some of the ways we can determine if a particular doctrine is good or bad.



## Tools to Test Doctrine

There are some tools to test whether a particular doctrine is good or bad. This is important and is scriptural. Let's look at some of the tests you can use to evaluate doctrines and beliefs and determine if they are good doctrine or bad doctrine. These are determining the origin, evaluating the context, and observing whether someone grows spiritually and lives a godly life because of the doctrine.

### Determining the Origin of the Doctrine

Good doctrine is always sourced in scripture. It is not thought up by a person or derived through consensus. We read Jesus' response to a crowd's question while he is teaching in the temple. The people are amazed at his teaching and wisdom and ask where he obtained such wisdom without formal learning. Jesus responds in John 7:16-18.

#### *John 7:16-18*

(16) Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. (17) Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. (18) Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

If anything points out good doctrine versus bad doctrine this passage of scripture does. Jesus plainly tells them that what he is teaching does not come from him, but from God. He tells them he does not speak on his own but only what God tells him to.

He goes on to explain that anyone who speaks on their own or within their own authority does it for selfish reasons. When evaluating doctrine you must determine the origin. Is the belief in question coming from scripture or not? That is the first question to ask. If there is no scripture to back up the belief, it is not from God and should not be considered good doctrine. Once you have determined whether a doctrine was sourced in the Bible or not you must be sure that the doctrine is kept in context with the whole of the Bible.

### Evaluating the Context of the Doctrine

One of the most dangerous things we can do is take scripture out of context. It is the most common thing mankind does with scripture and many have been led astray because of it. Cults have formed and entire societies have fallen because of it.

I am always wary of a supporting scripture that is only a partial sentence. This is not a hard and fast rule, but rarely should a partial sentence in a verse be used to determine and teach doctrine. Good doctrine is also able to be supported by multiple passages of scripture. When you read the [Cell Life Church International Statement of Faith](#) you will see that each of our core beliefs has multiple pieces of scripture supporting each core belief.

Many bad doctrines have been created by either misinterpreting scripture, misunderstanding the context of scripture, or not understanding the social and historical setting of a particular passage of scripture. Cults have formed over things like women needing head coverings, men having multiple wives, cutting hair, not cutting hair, and more.



The only way to know if scripture is being taken out of context is to spend time in scripture. You must be reading your Bible regularly and not just the same few passages over and over. We must take the Bible as a whole work. There is a passage that speaks to this in Matthew. The Pharisees were the teachers of the law. One of them was testing Jesus and asked what was the greatest commandment. Let's read Jesus' response in Matthew 22:37-40.

#### *Matthew 22:37-40*

(37) Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' (38) This is the first and greatest commandment. (39) And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (40) All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Jesus tells us that all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. That tells us that all of scripture, the entire Bible has to agree with and fall in line with loving God with everything in us and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves.

We must evaluate every doctrine with scripture as a whole. It must maintain its truthfulness and standing throughout scripture. The Bible does not contradict itself so if a doctrine contradicts the Bible it is bad doctrine.

If a doctrine divides or causes disharmony or if it causes someone's focus to shift away from God or stop growing spiritually, it is a bad doctrine also.

#### *Observing the Believer's Spiritual Growth and Life*

Bad doctrine often has a personal benefit for someone, not a benefit for the whole of the Church. Bad doctrine divides and controls people where good doctrine brings unity, understanding, and most of all love for God and one another.

One of the best ways to evaluate a belief or principle is to see its effect on a person's life. Good doctrine does not primarily control people, it causes them to see this world more clearly and grow spiritually closer to God through Jesus Christ. Bad doctrine leads people to have adverse reactions to calamity and tribulations in life. Good doctrine will cause people to focus more and more on Jesus and draw closer and closer to God.

We see bad doctrine when it is used to justify poor behavior or actions. As we said earlier, this is most prevalent when taking scripture out of context. Good doctrine encourages and lifts up the believer always pointing to Jesus and the power of the gospel. This final evaluation is critical in determining whether a doctrine is meant to guide people to God in Christ or down a path of destruction terminating with the devil himself.

#### *Conclusion*

Doctrine must be evaluated. For a doctrine to be good it must pass each of these evaluations. It must be sourced in scripture, stay in context throughout the whole of the Bible, and cause someone to grow spiritually and live a godly life. If it does not pass all those tests, it is a bad doctrine and should not be taught.

