

# What is "Sound Doctrine"?

by David Posey

It has perplexed me on more than one occasion to hear a preacher publicly criticize preaching on marriage or raising children or other similarly practical matters. I agree with those who stress that it must be done right; in other words, it must be done with a godly perspective, with the word of God in hand, and not presented as so much "good advice" or as "my experiences in raising faithful children." But I've heard some all but say those things shouldn't be talked about in the pulpit at all. In fact, some will say that where that kind of practical preaching is commonplace, there is an absence of "doctrinal preaching."

Huh? Read Titus 2. Paul brackets his exhortation to Titus in the chapter with these statements: v. 1, "...speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine" and v. 15, "these things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority..." (NASB). In between these two statements, we would expect to find some things that Paul considers "sound doctrine" and some topics that preachers should preach. What do we find? We read instructions to older men, older women, younger men, younger women and instructions to preachers and to servants. He covers gossip, love of husbands and children, homemaking, speech, and pilfering. He puts all of this practical instruction on a solid theological basis (vv. 11-14). But the practical instruction is there, and Paul seems to think it is vital.

Perhaps some preachers would be better servants if they began preaching on these things than looking for things to argue with other preachers about. While debate on marriage and divorce is necessary at times, perhaps if some of us preached more about the sanctity and importance of marriage, there would be less marriage and divorce problems to argue about. Perhaps we should spend more time seeking answers to the questions most people in the pew are actually asking.

Now, it would be arrogant of me to leave the impression that I know what everyone believes in every church across the land (or even in California). I don't know what problems and issues brethren are facing in every congregation. I can only speak from my own experience in preaching here at Folsom and in the other churches with which I am somewhat familiar.

With that disclaimer, let me say that it seems that wherever I go people are not asking

the same questions that some preachers and writers are trying to answer. It seems the average person in the pew is more concerned with dealing with their teenage daughter's rebellion, their bosses' unreasonable demands or their co-worker's bad mouth than with the reach of Romans 14, or how many covenants there are, or questions about the nature of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Before I'm hung in effigy for heresy, let me hasten to add that I know that all of these issues are important. Only a fool would argue otherwise. There are times, in fact, when they may be crucial and failure to teach on them in a local church could be viewed as a gross dereliction of duty. I also agree that theology ("doctrine") must precede practice, or there is no foundation for our practice. It's one thing to be faithful to your wife because you love your wife, quite another to be faithful because you love God and your wife. Loving God is a theological (or "doctrinal") issue.

But by their very nature, most of these issues are difficult to put into practical, every day terms. And whether we like it or not, most people live in the "practical every day," not in the world of theological ideas and concepts. While there is a practical application to the one-covenant doctrine, for example, it's lost on the majority of Christians most of the time. It simply does not speak to their day-to-day circumstances. The question of how the Holy Spirit indwells a Christian is not of great moment to a mother with four small children under six who must raise them in an increasingly dangerous and hostile world.

All I'm saying is that in our effort to move men and women closer to God, we need to preach the whole counsel of God and be very careful that we don't become so focused on some of these more abstract issues that we lose sight of our purpose – to teach sound doctrine. All of it.

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