Does Doctrine Really Matter?

Psalm 111:10; Psalm 119:66; Proverbs 2:2-6; 1 Timothy 4:6; 1 Timothy 6:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 4:2-3; Titus 1:9; Titus 2:1
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Is it enough to "believe in Jesus" in some amorphous sense that divorces "faith" from any particular doctrine about Him, or is doctrine—and the *content* of our faith—really important after all?

Scripture plainly teaches that we must be *sound in the faith*—which is to say that doctrine *does* matter (1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:2-3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). It matters a lot.

"If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and *understands nothing*" (1 Timothy 6:3-4, emphasis added).

Sound, biblical doctrine is a necessary aspect of true wisdom and authentic faith. The attitude that scorns doctrine while elevating feelings or blind trust cannot legitimately be called faith at all, even if it masquerades as Christianity. It is actually an irrational form of unbelief.

God holds us accountable for *what we believe* as well as *how we think* about the truth He has revealed. All Scripture testifies to the fact that God wants us to *know* and *understand* the truth. He wants us to be *wise*. His will is that we use our minds. We are supposed to think, meditate, and above all, to be discerning.

The content of our faith is crucial. Sincerity is not sufficient.

Consider, for example, these well-known verses. Note the repeated use of words like *truth, knowledge, discernment, wisdom,* and *understanding*:

- **"Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom" (Psalm 51:6).**
- **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Psalm 111:10).**
- **"Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Thy commandments" (Psalm 119:66).**
- **Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord, and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:2-**

6).

- "The beginning of wisdom is: acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).
- "We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 1:9).
- "In [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).
- "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

God's Word makes it abundantly clear that He wants us to use our minds. And one of the most vital duties facing every Christian—especially in an era (such as ours) when the church is overrun with contradictory ideas and spiritual confusion—is the duty of discernment.

In the days and weeks to come, we are going to consider what Scripture has to say about discernment. We'll look at some common pitfalls that often ensnare the best of Christians, and we'll look at some popular ideas circulating in the church today that demand careful biblical analysis and discriminating wisdom.

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