

Good morning church family, it is a privilege to share with you one last time. Before we get started, I just want to say to each of you from the bottom of my heart, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to serve as the youth and young adults pastor here at our church. You have been my church family for quite some time and I am so grateful for you all. I pray that the lord blesses you and your families. And I pray that, as I do for my students, that you would seek Jesus first, in all your ways acknowledge him and that he will make your paths straight.

As I was thinking about my final chance to share god's word with you as one of your pastors, the ideas and topics came flooding in. I had all kinds of directions. To make it even more exciting on what to preach, Pastor Jerry is not here. I could get away with a pretty far out there sermon! So open your bibles to song of Solomon chapter 3. No im just kidding. But as I though through what the Lord was putting on my heart to leave you all with, two words continued to ring. Sound Doctrine. This morning may seem a little different, it may be a bit more personal. This is a message from my heart to yours. The last youth group lesson I gave, I left the students with four words. Don't waste your life. In my final sermon, I want to leave you with four as well. Strive for sound doctrine.

Before we get started would you pray with me; Father I am so thankful for this church. The great blessing they have been to me these past 5 years. I am grateful for this morning and the words you have prepared in my heart. Holy spirit, allow me to get out of the way and let this time be glorifying to you alone God. We give you the praise. Amen.

Over the past two weeks you have heard from both pastor Jerry and Pastor Eric encouraging you to critically think through your beliefs on things like Jesus' glorious return and church unity. As I wrap up this break in the book of Acts, I want you to think about your beliefs as a whole. What do you believe? Each Sunday the pastors encourage and teach you through the preaching of Gods word. As you listen to

scripture and your local pastor, I would pray that you are challenged to process what God's word is saying and how you can apply it to your every day life. Strive for sound doctrine in your own life.

As we become fully devoted followers of Jesus together, let us not be complacent in where we are in our relationship to Christ. Stagnant water breeds filth and decay and mosquitos. Our part in our relationship with Jesus is like a river, we either are consistently working to paddle up stream or our sinful flesh will naturally pull us away from him. Thankfully He sustains us and strengthens us but we must be mindful of our hearts, and choose to grow daily in our walk with Christ.

As we grow together this morning, we are going to look at how to strive for sound doctrine through asking three questions; why we should care about sound doctrine, what should we use to study it and how we can apply it to our lives. A short definition of sound doctrine is correct teachings. A more detailed definition of sound doctrine in our context is correct teaching from God, about God, that directs us to the glory of God. Basically, sound doctrine is making sure we are teaching and believing what is true in the eyes of the lord.

Do you ever feel like the world around you is changing? People are coming up with all these new ideas and culture is always evolving. Being a youth pastor, my head is spinning with the new social media apps and trends. New things come out every day it feels like and the world is not slowing down. As a young buck I use to think a lot about change and what we could improve on and how we are going to do more. But as time has taught me a few things, as it has taught you a few things I'm sure, I have learned a valuable lesson. Just because its new doesn't mean it's better, just because its old doesn't mean it's always outdated. That's not to say we should totally reject change, but we should be cautious and critically think through it.

There are a lot of new ideas, gadgets, technology, you name it out there. Again, the world is ever changing. Even in Christianity, things are changing. Or at least people want things to change.

Always getting better. Always looking to improve, what's the next best thing. How can we keep up with culture? And while some of that is important, the cult of new is sometimes dangerous. Though it might sound exciting, it can lead us astray from our foundation if we are not careful.

There is a movement right now for another reformation, I'm quite fond of the last one, but I have to say this one sounds like it is leading many away from biblical doctrine. Instead of scripture alone, they would change it to "just the scripture we like, alone." Don't believe me? Just this past February there was a progressive church in Nashville that said that the bible was not the word of God. Christians all over are questioning traditions, questioning their experiences in the church, questioning the bible. And while some questioning is good to strengthen our doctrine; if we do not hold to sound doctrine, that is a biblical gospel centered teachings and understanding, what's to say we aren't next to change?

Sound doctrine matters. It is not enough to say, I'm a Christian so what I believe is truth. Most of America would define themselves as Christians. Sound doctrine helps us define what we believe to be true. And it starts with the gospel. 1 Cor 15:3-4 says Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures [and] . . . he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." This is the gospel, the good news. Every doctrinal statement, every action, every theological point, everything we believe must flow out of the gospel, laid out in scripture and it must never be changed.

Paul defines sound doctrine in titus 2: teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine..., for the grace has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope.

The good news of Jesus' death and resurrection is not ours to change but only to proclaim and put our hope in. Many in this world want to change it, make it more accepting, alter just a few words here and there. Only listen to what they want to hear. But they forget that God is never changing, he is

and was and is to come. He did not change from the Old Testament to the new. His word hasn't changed. And the true gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be changed. Though many will try. It is perfect, complete, holy, and infinite, as he is and as his word is given to us in the bible.

Revelation 22:18-19 give us a stark warning against trying to change the word of God. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Sound doctrine should matter to each of us because it is a reflection of God's word and the gospel of Christ in our lives and beliefs. Again, it is teaching from God, about God, that directs us to the glory of God. Sound doctrine is not just having the right answer, it's having the right source. The source of sound doctrine cannot be our own understandings. What we think is right and morally good. It must be rooted in something that is above us. If we don't start there, we can make anything we believe sound doctrine. It just wont always be biblical or true. And that is scary place to be.

How do we know if what we believe is sound, correct? What should we study to strive for sound doctrine? How can each of us individually and as a church know that we are teaching and believing sound doctrine? Last summer Pastor Jerry preached a message about sources. Places where we get our information from. It is on our website if you would like to rehear it, but he stressed the point that we must have reliable sources of truth. Starting with God's word.

If we wish to know and apply sound doctrine, we must acknowledge that it doesn't come from our understandings. Sound doctrine comes from God's word alone. That word specifically revealed to us in the bible. Sound doctrine flows out of every verse, every chapter, every page and book in this holy library. God's word has always existed, it is unchangeable, infinite, and holy.

If you just take a step back and think about it for a minute, the creator of all of things, gave us 66 books outlining who's in charge, how much he loves us, what he has done for us and what he has planned for us. And sprinkled throughout is what we must do in response. A legible book outlining his word for us. How amazing is that? That the holy spirit provided this book to be the ultimate authority in our lives because it came straight from him. When we study sound doctrine we must first study God's word laid out in the bible.

When you listen to pastor Jerry, pastor Eric or anyone else for that matter, you should have your own bible open. Follow along, don't just take their word for it. Far too often Christians in the world listen to teachers who stray away from God's word. Paul gives us a warning in 2 Tim. 4:3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

It's so much easier to seek out sources and teachers that agree with you. It is so easy to listen to that news channel because they agree with your political party. Yet they do not always speak the truth. I have spent a significant amount of time with Pastor Jerry and Pastor Eric. I don't know much beyond how amazing God's grace is, but I do know that those two love God and love you. And that, though they could fail, they strive to preach and teach sound biblical doctrine.

Listen to the words they say, they pour their hearts out into those sermons, see how the holy spirit is working through them. If you call this church your home, you have good pastors who care for you. They may not always say what you want to hear, but they have been called to preach the word here in Bemidji. Have your bibles open when they teach but allow them to speak into your life.

Strive for sound doctrine by reading your bibles, consistently coming to church to hear the word of God preached, and surround yourself with other believers. As Col. 3:2 puts it Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. Make sure you are striving for sound doctrine daily.

We know that sound doctrine is important, we know that our study of sound doctrine must start with the bible, but how can we apply it? What good is it to strive for sound doctrine if it doesn't come out in the actions of your life? I could spend a lot of time answering this question, how can we apply it? But I am just going to focus on one simple way. Allow sound biblical doctrine to influence your world view. In fact, I would urge you, as I have to remind myself daily, allow sound biblical doctrine to be your world view.

What do I mean by this? Each one of us has a way in which we look at the world, these are our world view lenses or glasses. How we see the world around us. Christians and non-Christians alike can have all sorts of lenses. Sometimes we take off one set of glasses and put on another depending on what we are looking at. Politics have one, economics may another, and sometimes we even try and put on other's lenses to see how they view the world. Many people have progressive lenses, in which they interpret everything with a tint of left leaning understanding. Others have a very conservative pair of glasses on with a pair of traditional red white and blue patriotic lenses. Both look at the same event, news story or passage of the bible and view it very differently. Whose view is right?

The different worldviews cause division. Not just in our country or the world but the church as well. How are we supposed to live with those who have different views? What if someone at church has a different view of doctrine than me, what if they are an Arminian? Or worse a Calvinist? How can sound doctrine help us navigate these divisions? Let me offer another pair of world view glasses. Put on with humility and a commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is a famous verse in the bible that we would all agree with, but we struggle to apply. Romans 12:2 Paul says "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Might I add, do not put on any other worldview glasses before your biblical one. Interpret the world through the lens of the bible, sound doctrine, not the other way around. Don't allow yourself to succumb to a conservative or liberal view, a Calvinist or Arminian view, or another view before your biblical Christ centered lenses. You have a lot of presuppositions, your culture, race, gender, age, all define you. But as a follower of Jesus, He is the first thing that defines you.

The world is changing, the world wants to influence you and me and our students. It wants to tell us what glasses we are to wear, what source we are to use to find truth and it wants us to stray from sound doctrine. Not to strive for it.

The passage that was read early is my heart for you this morning. It takes the answers to our three questions and reverses the order. Apply sound doctrine, use God's word as your source and because of the gospel it all matters.

1 Peter 3:13

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats[b]; do not be frightened." [c]

View the world with the lenses of sound biblical doctrine. Do good because you have been called by Christ. Apply it to your actions.

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Study God's word. Not only revering him as lord, not only knowing the doctrine but applying to your life so that others ask, what is the reason you have hope in this world? You will have an answer.

17 For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Sound doctrine leads us back to the gospel, where Christ's death and resurrection paid the price for our sins. And that's why it matters so much.

Church Family I pray that you would strive for sound doctrine, and understanding how important it is, where we should study it, and why we should apply it.

Would you pray with me?

Father we are so grateful for all that you have done for us and provided. Holy spirit you have worked through so many so that we can gather this morning. I pray that each of us would strive for sound doctrine, strive for your word and truth father. Jesus we thank you so much for what you have done on the cross. Making all of this possible. We want to honor you with our hearts, minds and actions. Father a pray a special blessing over my church family here in bemidji. I pray that you sustain each one of them and that they would choose to seek you first in all their ways. We give you the glory for ever and ever Jesus, amen.