

How To Avoid False Doctrine

(appropriate for High-Schoolers or older)
40 minutes - Michael R. Daily 8/27/06

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(Source: Rev. John S. Mahon, Grace Community International, Houston, TX, www.gciweb.org)

Handout the one page summary sheet (last page). We won't have time to go over all of these but we will cover **Doctrine vs Historical Narrative (II-A)** and **The Rule of Subjugation (III-D)**.

What is Doctrine?

A body of principles presented for acceptance or belief, as by a religious, political, scientific, or philosophic group. An authoritative principle, belief, or statement of ideas, especially one considered to be absolutely true. Also called dogma.

Where does Christian doctrine come from? The Bible.

We Believe That The Bible Is The Literal Word of God

- 1) **Inspired by God** – actual words of God, not like a musician “inspired” to write a song
- 2) **Inerrant** - without error (what about all the mistakes in it? There aren't any)
- 3) **Eternal** - has been protected by God throughout history
- 4) **Without Contradiction** – If you find one what does it mean? It means you are wrong.
- 5) **Authoritative** – Has the right to tell us what to do. It judges us (Heb 4:12), we do not judge it (I like this part of the Bible but I don't like that part)
- 6) It is our **Spiritual Food** (I Timothy 4:6)

This is the foundation of Christian doctrine. If you move away from belief in these the following will result:

I Timothy 4:1 - But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons

Satan viciously attacks our belief in the credibility of the Bible because if he can get us to waver on any one of the things listed he can get us to believe a doctrine of demons.

Remember, demons are smarter than you are and they have been doing this for thousands of years. Their specialty is deception – getting people to believe things that are not true. If you don't believe the basic tenets of biblical inspiration and inerrancy you will end up believing a doctrine of demons one way or the other.

Doctrine vs Historical Narrative

Is everything in the Bible doctrine? No. There is also something called Historical Narrative.

Doctrine: *the universal truths of the Bible that apply to all people, living at any time in the past, present, or future, living at any place on the Earth in any culture. Doctrine is that part of the Bible that sounds like God is preaching a sermon to you when you read it.*

Historical Narrative: *the parts of the Bible that describe what happened to some guy at a particular place and time in history but it is not universal truth. It's like watching God's TV show about someone else's life.*

Example: When Jesus says, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” which one is that? It is doctrine because it sounds like God is preaching a sermon at you and it is universally true. It is not about what happened to some guy.

Which is it, Doctrine or Historical Narrative?

I Corinthians 10:13 – No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (doctrine)

Exodus 14:15,16 – Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶"As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. (historical narrative).

What would the implications be if we thought this was doctrine? We would think that any believer could part the Red Sea or we might think if Moses parted the Red Sea then I should be able to part the Rio Grande river.

I Timothy 5:23 – No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. (historical narrative).

This is about some guy named Timothy and his stomach problems. If it was doctrine we would all be required by God to drink wine – it would be a universal truth.

I Timothy 3:8 – Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain (doctrine – sounds like God preaching)

Ephesians 5:22 – Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (doctrine).

Let me use this verse to show what false doctrine sounds like

"When studying this passage it is important to understand the context. You see, in Ephesus at the time Paul wrote this there was a serious problem in the church in that the Christian wives in Ephesus were out-of-control barbarians and Paul knew he had to do something to get control of the situation so he wrote this command to them to address this problem. But today we are much more smarter than they were back then and women today are highly educated. And so this passage is not relevant to us in today's modern world."

When you hear someone talking like this your ears should perk up because you may be hearing false doctrine. If you think about it what they are doing is they are taking a doctrinal passage and they are trying to convince you it is historical narrative.

Hosea 1:2 - When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD." (historical narrative)

If it was doctrine all Christian men would have to marry prostitutes.

Key Point: False doctrine results when a doctrinal passage is treated as if it was historical narrative. False doctrine also results when a historical narrative passage is treated as if it were a doctrinal passage.

The Rule of Subjugation

Not only does the Bible have authority over us but it is the supreme authority which supersedes all other authorities. God's Word is not subject to any authority other than itself.

Hebrews 4:12 - "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

When reading the Word of God, the Word of God judges us, we do not judge it. The Word of God judges our thoughts, our intentions, and our heart.

How many of you believe the 6 truths of biblical inerrancy and inspiration?

It's easy to say we believe these things and raise our hands. But the implications of believing these things is absolutely astonishing.

Tonight, I am going to take you through some examples so you can see this.

1. Man's Experience is Subject to Scripture

Some people seem to think that the truths in the Word of God are meant to be tested by man before they can be fully accepted - like items on a buffet table. We sample this and that, rejecting one and accepting the other based on how they affect us.

2 Corinthians 5:7 - "for we walk by faith, not by sight" This means that...

1. If we experience it as true, but the Bible says it is false, we deem it to be false.
2. If we experience it as false, but the Bible says it is true, we deem it to be true.
3. Our decisions in life are not based on personal experience, but on the authority of God's Word and His Word is subject to no other authority.

"I saw it with my own eyes" – we'll that's not good enough.

God has said yes, He is coming quickly. We deem that to be true even if it does not seem like He is coming quickly.

By contrast, if God says no, "you shall not commit adultery," yet we experience the desire for an adulterous relationship as something that will improve our life, we still do not do this thing. We regard it as sin.

You have to make a decision. Which will be the basis for your doctrine. Your experience and observations or God's Word?

Corollary: Results don't validate doctrine. Lack of results doesn't invalidate doctrine.

I have a friend who is in full time Christian ministry and so are his brother and sister. All 3 children grew up to be full time ministers. Wow, what parenting principles did their parents follow that led to such a fantastic result? Their parents were non-christian alcoholics. They were drunk, abusive, negligent, nonresident parents, and hosted drunken parties on a regular basis. If your doctrine is based on results this is how you would need to raise your children if you wanted the same result. This is the doctrine of demons that you will be led to if you put experience, observation, and results in supremacy over the Word of God.

2. Culture is Subject to Scripture

People often make the mistake of viewing culture as neutral.

Romans 3:12 - "All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. "

Chemistry is the study of the elements; this is morally neutral. Culture, however, is made up not of elements, but rather of people. It exists only on the basis of the beliefs and actions of people, who are fallen and sinful. It is not morally neutral, but depraved.

The Bible has authority over culture. When there is conflict, culture is wrong, Scripture is right.

3. Feelings are Subject to Scripture

When our feelings collide with Scripture then our feelings are judged to be wrong, not the Bible. If we read a passage and it feels like God is wrong in an area, then that is an area of repentance & submission in our lives.

Proverbs 14:12 – There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Romans 9:20 - On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

When we question God, it is important that this question should be informative in nature and not one which questions His moral integrity and will.

The question “Why” can be an act of submission or rebellion, depending on how it is asked. It can be a request for further information to insure more complete submission or it can be a response of rebellion, bringing into question the moral intentions of the authority. Our feelings are subject to the Word of God. When they are in conflict with the Word of God, they are wrong and the Word of God is right.

4. Ministry Success is Subject to Scripture

“No one ever thought of questioning his life or his ministry methods. I mean, he had one of the most successful ministries in the U.S. Who would think of arguing with that kind of success?” Supervisor explaining why a minister was able to go so long in marital infidelity and financial mismanagement without being caught.

“He had one of the greatest teaching ministries going. No one ever questioned his family. Sure there were indications but God was blessing his ministry so greatly. How could a man with a ministry like that possibly be out of God’s will? It was only later that we realized all of the biblical principles in his life that were being overlooked or violated for the sake of the ministry.” Missionary supervisor explaining why a missionary on his team was allowed to get to where his child attempted suicide and his wife left him.

The Samson Principle: Samson was a man of terrible character performing great works of God. We praise God for working through Samson, but we compare his lifestyle to the Word of God before emulating it.

Judges 16:1 - Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.

5. Miracles are Subject to Scripture

“Don’t try to tell me this is not from God. I saw him heal her with my own eyes.”
Pastor in discussion on the doctrinal improprieties of a visiting evangelist.

“Don’t try to tell me this is not from God. I saw him heal her with my own eyes.”
Indian student in defense of his Hindu Holy Man.

The Moses Principle: Moses did great signs and wonders but so did Pharaoh’s magicians. As a result Pharaoh did not believe Moses or obey God when his magicians were able to do the same things. What made Moses a man of God was not the miracles, but that he taught and obeyed the Word of God.

Exodus 7:8-13 - Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, Work a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent." So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Miracles occur throughout the Bible, sometimes miracles are performed by God, sometimes by Satan, sometimes by angels, sometimes by demons, sometimes by men of God, and sometimes by servants of the devil. We will want to subject all miracles to the Word of God, not blindly accredit them to God.

The simple rule of thumb here is to remember that if a miracle or spiritual occurrence takes place that is all that can be said about it.

All else is subject to the Word of God.

Matthew 7:22 - Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Jesus Christ Himself rebukes the desire for "signs and wonders".

John 4:48 - "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."

Luke 11:29 - "This Generation is a wicked Generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah."

6. Praise is Subject to Scripture

"Of course it is from God. He praises God, he gives God the credit, it could not be of Satan and be able to do that could he?" - Christian businessman in discussion about a pastor with questionable doctrinal teachings.

The David Principle: David wrote wonderful Psalms of Praise and gave us the most praise-filled book of the Bible. Yet, his life was also characterized by adultery, murder, and failure to order his family, discipline his children, and raise them by scriptural guidelines. David was a man of praise and a man after God's own heart but we will want to subject his values to the Word of God before emulating them.

7. Gifts are Subject to Scripture

"Their church manifests all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I don't see even half of them at work in yours. That in itself is all I need to see to tell me who is right and wrong on this issue." Campus minister discussing a principle of ministry.

"I don't care what they teach, if they can heal my son, that's all I care about".

Mother and fellow teacher, discussing the doctrinal teachings of a traveling evangelist

The Corinthian Principle: The Church at Corinth was highly gifted. Yet a careful reading of the church and family life of the Church at Corinth shows it to be bankrupt in terms of God's design

Key Point: A gift of the Holy Spirit is by nature a gift. It is not given on the basis of merit otherwise it would be called a reward of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 11:29 - for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Irrevocable: *Impossible to recall, withdraw, or reverse.*

Worship leader example: Someone may say "When he leads us in worship I feel like I'm being taken right into the throne room of God – what a godly man (maybe, maybe not).

Evangelist example: You (a sower) disagree with someone on an issue of doctrine but this person also has the gift of evangelism. Someone may say, "He has led many to Christ but you haven't led anyone to Christ. I'm going to believe him and not you because God is working through him".

Just because someone has a spiritual gift does not mean that everything they believe and do is correct.

8. Visions are Subject to Scripture

"I was at a meeting of the Gideons and a man stood up and related how he had died and then been brought back to life. He had seen heaven and was able to tell us what it looked like. He saw Jesus, the streets, the mountains, people he knew who had died, his grandmother rocking in her favorite chair and even his little baby who had died a year before. He was the happiest little baby in the entire world. It was wonderful."

- Christian lawyer at a testimony service at a Gideon camp meeting.

"I don't see what you are making such a stink over. All he was doing was sharing an experience. How do we know he did not in fact go to heaven? The few things that came out in his testimony that are not in the Bible are of no consequence. I doubt seriously if anyone was listening as closely as you were. Chances are they went right past the whole congregation." Pastor in discussion after this same man gave his testimony in church at the invitation of the above lawyer.

"If we are going to stay the same age we are now when we die and go to heaven then I don't want to go there. I thought we were going to get perfect bodies; I don't want to be stuck for eternity in some old decrepit body. Or what if I die tonight and have to be 14 for eternity? I can't stand to think about it." Teenage daughter of a deacon in the church where the lawyer's guest recounted his story. She has refused to go to church or youth meetings since that occurrence.

I Corinthians 15: 35-53 - But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.....And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality

Extra-Biblical Revelation

Extra-biblical revelation is any new information concerning spiritual things that is not found in the Bible.

Revelation 22:18,19 - " I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."

This closes revelation until the return of Christ. The Bible is a finished product, and nothing more will be added or taken away.

Extra-Biblical Revelation Includes:

- 1) Visions in which Jesus is visually seen or in which God talks to them.
- 2) Near-death experiences where information is gleaned about Heaven or Hell that is not in the Bible.
- 3) Information about the passage into Heaven or Hell which is not in the Bible
- 4) Any spiritual truth or teaching which is not a direct quote of Scripture
- 5) Dream, vision, or near-death experience where they overhear a conversation God is having with someone
- 6) Any statement that begins with a variation of "God said"

If from God, we would need to write these revelations down and staple them into our Bibles. This is unacceptable. We do not say that these people do not have experiences. But we do say that these experiences are not new revelations from God. Instead, we hold to the doctrine of the closed nature of the Bible. No new information will be added and none will be taken away.

Doctrine: The Authority & Supremacy of the Word of God

(Source: Rev. John S. Mahon, Grace Community International, Houston, TX, www.gciweb.org)

I. The Bible is God's Word; it is the literal Word of God

- A. **Inspired** - God Breathed
- B. **Inerrant** - without error
- C. **Eternal** - God has watched over and shepherded it throughout the ages
- D. **Without Contradiction** - it is pure and tried by God before delivery to man
- E. **Authoritative** - God's Word judges man, man does not judge God's Word
- F. **Spiritual Food** - man needs continual nourishment from the whole Word of God.

II. There are basic questions we must ask when reading or studying the Bible.

- A. **Doctrine vs. Historical Narrative** (God preaching a sermon vs something happened to someone)
- B. **New Covenant vs. Old Covenant** (some things came through to new covenant, some didn't)
- C. **Parables & Symbols** (does the Bible explain them or not, if not don't guess)
- D. **Prophetic & Hidden Things** (does the Bible explain them or not, if not don't guess)
- E. **Universal Truth or Devotional Thought** (universal application for everyone or just you?)
- F. **Chapter & Verse Please** (where does the Bible actually say that?)

III. Basic Rules of Interpreting the Bible

- A. **Rule of Language** - The meanings of words in the Bible cannot be changed to fit our biases; we must come to terms with the definition of the words used by the Holy Spirit. The meanings of words in the Bible are important. We need to look up the dictionary definition of key words that the Bible uses. When you do you will find that the words don't always mean what you thought they meant. Sometimes you will find that the meaning is more precise and specific than you thought. A good indicator that a pastor is working hard to teach you sound doctrine is that he will tell you what the key words are in the Greek and Hebrew and he will tell you what the definition of the word is and its nuances. You don't have to be a Greek and Hebrew scholar but you need to use a dictionary to define the key words in your Bible study.
- B. **Rule of First Meaning** - The obvious meaning is always embraced unless the passage is presented as symbol, parable or prophecy.
- C. **Rule of Clear vs. Obscure** - We do not abandon the clear passages for the obscure. If there are 50 clear passages on a topic and one obscure passage we don't ignore the clear passages to create a meaning for the obscure one – we seek the whole mind of God on the issue.
- D. **Rule of Subjugation - All experiences, events and authorities are subject to Scripture.**
 - 1. Experiences: If we experience it as true, but the Bible says it is false, then we deem it to be false. If we experience it as false, but the Bible says it is true, then we deem it to be true. Our decisions in life are not based on majority rule or personal experience, but on the authority of God's Word.
 - 2. Culture isn't neutral, it is fallen and sinful. When they conflict, culture is wrong & scripture is seen to be right.
 - 3. Feelings are subject to the Bible. When they conflict, feelings are seen to be wrong and the Bible is right.
 - 4. Neither Ministry Success, Miracles, Praise, Gifts, nor Visions substantiate the Word of God.
 - 5. As a result, all aspects of life and ministry are subject to Scripture:

Experience is subject to Scripture	Culture is subject to Scripture
Feelings are subject to Scripture	Ministry success is subject to Scripture
Miracles are subject to Scripture	Praise is subject to Scripture
Gifts are subject to Scripture	Visions are subject to Scripture
- E. **Rule of the Total Mind of God** - To understand a biblical principal we must seek what God says on it from the entire Bible, not simply a group of Scripture or single passage.
- F. **Rule of Stated Authority** - don't imply things not stated in Bible. For example, some people might think that if God wants wives to submit to husbands (Ephesians 5:22) then it must also be true that women are to submit to men. But the Bible doesn't say that, so we can't imply it.
- G. **Rules of Limitations**
 - 1. Secret Things - that which God has chosen not to reveal
 - 2. Higher Things - revelation that is unexplained
 - 3. Things We're Too Sinful To Understand - clear revelation, but we can't understand God's motives or thinking.
 - 4. Extra-Biblical Revelation - spiritual experiences that yield knowledge not presented in the Bible are rejected.

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *How To Avoid False Doctrine*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Timothy 4:1-6*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 10:13, I Timothy 3:8, Ephesians 5:22*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Exodus 14:15-16, I Timothy 5:23, Hosea 1:2-3*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *How To Avoid False Doctrine*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 4:12*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 5:7*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 3:12*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *How To Avoid False Doctrine*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 14:12, Romans 9:20*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Judges 16:1*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Exodus 7:8-13, Matthew 7:22, John 4:48, Luke 11:29*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *How To Avoid False Doctrine*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 11:29*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 15:35-53*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 22:18-19*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?