

ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR Savior

⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to **rebuke** those who contradict it.

¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹ They **must be silenced**, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore **rebuke them sharply**, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

What kind of food is good for you these days? Fat, eggs, butter, bacon, whole milk, raw milk, coconut oil, red meat, chocolate? I grew up being taught that all of these were bad for you and now every day someone tells me that they are fantastic and even necessary for you. I like eating all of these things way more than not eating them, especially if I can incorporate all of them into a single meal. 😊

Here's something that is undeniably good for you: sound doctrine. Now some of you may think sound doctrine is like eating dry oatmeal as opposed to a thick juicy steak. If that's how you feel, I would like for you to be convinced that sound doctrine is a juicy steak or salmon or whatever makes your mouth water. Food that is both good to eat and good for you have a double benefit. You enjoy it on the way down and you know it is making you more healthy. Sound doctrine is the same way. We can even see this in the word itself.

Take verse nine for example. *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.* The word for sound is *hygeis*. What English word does that look like? Hygiene, right? And hygiene is about a lot more than just washing your hands. Hygiene is the "conditions or practices conducive to maintaining health and preventing disease." Therefore, the literal meaning is not just sound doctrine but "healthy doctrine." In fact, the ISV translation says this: *so that he may be able to encourage others with healthy doctrine and refute those who oppose it.* The same is true in Titus 2:1. *But as for you, teach what is consistent with healthy doctrine.*

I told you it was good for you. Right doctrine is healthy doctrine. When you see it for what it is, you enjoy it when you consume it and then you get the double benefit of knowing it's good for

you. But convincing you that sound doctrine is good for you is a bit like making you eat your vegetables—everyone says it's good for you, but you can't seem to stomach it. That's because we misunderstand sound doctrine. People think that doctrine is dry information reserved for theologians and stuffed shirts. Doctrine can become boring in the wrong hands, but doctrine is simply truth. Biblical truth.

Here's an example. You were dead in your trespasses and sins and headed for eternal destruction. If you trust in Christ alone for your salvation, he makes you alive and grants you eternal life. That's the basic message of the Bible. It is the greatest thing that could ever happen to you and at least sometimes, this truth should overwhelm us. On Monday for some reason I listened to Andrew Peterson's song, *Is He Worthy*. I played it twice on the way to the elder meeting and cried both times. I played it for the elders and got choked up again. Then I played it on the way home from the elder meeting and cried again. The combination of the music and lyrics had a powerful effect on me. The basic message of salvation brought me to tears. That's what healthy doctrine can do to you and for you. It tastes amazing when you consume it and it keeps working good within you. Doctrine is truth and truth transforms us.

But if healthy doctrine transforms, unhealthy doctrine does the opposite. Verse sixteen gives the crux of the problem and one could say, the chief reason that Paul wrote to Titus in the first place. *They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works*. That is the kind of description that you would never want to be said of you. Rich says he knows God, but do you see the way he lives his life? An Episcopal priest witnessed to Tim Farrell while he was tending bar. He challenged Tim to read the Bible and it eventually led to his conversion. But he also told Tim he was in that bar because most of his parishioners were there! It was his best chance to hang out with them and influence them for the better. This is what unhealthy doctrine will do to you. It can turn you into a first rank hypocrite.

This is a key verse for this book because there were false teachers in their midst peddling false doctrine and the results were disastrous. ¹¹*since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach*. That's the description of the problem on the island of Crete. The overall goal is found in 2:10. *so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*. Isn't that a beautiful verse? Remember, this our goal as believers, that our lives would adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. Slow down a minute and ponder what this means. This means that our lives are supposed to make God's truth attractive.

To adorn means to beautify. Men don't usually adorn themselves. We might shave and shower and put on a clean set of clothes, but we don't adorn ourselves like women do. Paul uses this in 1 Tim 2. *likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works*. Years ago I was coaching a juniors Bible quiz team and we were learning 1 Timothy. One of the young quizzers had long hair and it was her habit to twirl her hair while she was thinking and answering the question. She was quoting this passage while at that exact moment she was braiding her hair. The irony was not lost on me.

But is Paul saying that braided hair and gold jewelry are sinful? Absolutely not. What he means is that it is far better to be adorned by good works than to be adorned by gold jewelry. The goal

PROBLEM

They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

GOAL

so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

SOLUTION

- KNOW the Word—*hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught*
- TEACH the Word—*give instruction in sound doctrine*
- REBUKE with the Word—*rebuke those who contradict it*

taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

is that our good works would adorn the doctrine of God our Savior, but the problem is that unhealthy doctrine can lead us to “professing to know God but denying his works.” So how do we pursue the one and avoid the other? The answer comes in verse nine. *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as*

Know the word

Teach (to obey) the word

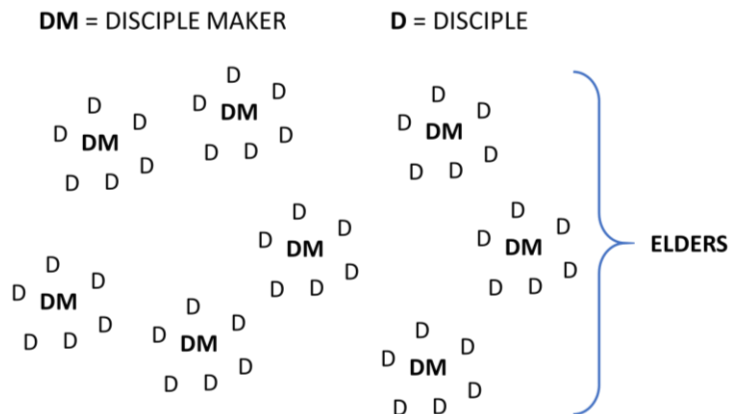
Exhort with the word

This is why there is a doctrinal test for elders and not just a character test. If character were the only attribute necessary, then we would just choose really nice guys to be our elders. We have a lot of really nice guys at Grace but not all of them sufficiently know, teach and exhort with the word. But one again I ask the question, who is supposed to know the word, teach the word and rebuke with the word? Is that just for elders? Once again we see that this instruction is for all believers. It’s like the diagram I showed you last week.

All believers are to be disciplemakers. And part of being a disciple maker is knowing the word, teaching the word and rebuking with the word. All disciplemaking must be centered on the word. This is the very purpose of the word of God.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for

training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



SOLUTION

- KNOW the Word
- TEACH (to obey) the Word
- REBUKE with the Word

Notice the perfect agreement with the Titus passage. Scripture is to be used for teaching and training in righteousness. That’s the positive or instructive use but it’s also to be used to rebuking and correction. That’s the corrective use of Scripture. That’s exactly what Paul said to Titus, isn’t it?

So getting back to the disciple making diagram...All disciple making requires that you know the word, can teach the word and exhort with the word. Again, this can take place within the family. You as the parent are the disciple makers and your kids are the disciples. So how much of the word do you need to know to teach them? As I have often said, if being a disciple were like twenty chapters in a book, all you need is to be a chapter ahead of them. You don't have to be able to preach a sermon or teach a Sunday School class. You don't have to be able to debate a skeptic on the stage. You don't have to be responsible for shepherding dozens of hundreds of people. That is the role of an elder, right? The only difference between a mature believer and an elder is the amount of influence. Elders care for larger flocks of God's people instead of smaller flocks like within a family.

Because elders are responsible for more people, they can have a greater impact for good or for evil. And this is what was happening in Crete. The false teachers were "upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach." Ancient Greek historian Polybius wrote this about the people who lived on the island of Crete where Titus was the chief elder. "So much in fact do sordid love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them, that the Cretans are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful."¹

This is why Paul wrote that "*Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.*" That sounds very harsh to our ears. I actually had a seminary prof imply that Paul was being racist here. I was quite shocked by that statement. Let's make sure we understand the context. First, Paul was quoting a prophet from Crete. So it's one of their own people who made this statement and Paul was merely quoting it. Second, to state facts is not at all the same thing as being racist. For example, it is a proven fact that Russia, Brazil and India have the most amount of misconduct observed by employees.² In other words, these nations are the least ethical and the most corrupt.

Does that mean that by their very nature, people from Russia, Brazil and India are more evil than anyone else? Not at all, it just means that something in their culture over the years has led to more corruption. You know that you can travel to dozens of countries in the world which are run by bribes. We had missionary friends in Poland years ago and they told us that they could hardly get anything done without bribing someone. I don't know if that is still true fifteen years later but it was very much true then. What happens is that over time cultures can become more and more corrupt if nothing is done to restrain the evil. This can happen in entire nations, certain cities, businesses, churches and families. Not that long ago it was widely agreed that the Dallas Cowboys operated this way. The owners and coaches did not restrain evil among the players so it grew until they developed this reputation. So the conclusion is that Paul was restating a common fact and was not at all being racist.

So two thousand years ago the false teachers were "upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach." But are there still people teaching false doctrine today and profiting from it? Are there people who teach what they ought not to teach for shameful gain? As a rule of thumb, anyone preaching on TV probably falls into this category. Not all of them, of course, but TV broadcasting is so expensive that it requires that people are taught what their itching ears want to hear. If they didn't tickle their ears, people would not tune in, and if they don't tune in, no one sends them large bags of money. Radio preachers are hit and miss but I would tend to shy away from TV preachers.

But it's not just TV. Church is big business nowadays. Some call it the Evangelical Industrial Complex. If you tickle their ears just right, a church can bring in tens of millions of dollars in offering per year. Now the last thing I want to say is that big always equals bad and small is always good. That's not even close to the truth but the fact remains that false teaching for shameful gain is at its all-time worst. Just by sheer numbers of people and amount of money, it literally is a million times worse than in Paul's day. Hordes of people claim to know God but deny him by their works.

What is the solution for this very common problem? *Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.* The word rebuke it used twice in this short passage, three times if you count verse 11 where Paul said that "they must be silenced." Here is another place in this passage that sounds harsh to our ears but let me explain why rebuke is always a necessary companion to teaching and sometimes it has to be a sharp rebuke.

- A sharp rebuke does not mean it lacks compassion.

If I was riding in the car with you and a child suddenly ran into the road and I yelled "Watch out," would that be wrong? That would be a sharp rebuke—and a loud rebuke—but it had to be said and it had to be said "sharply." Sometimes people are about to make a really horrible decision and they need to be rebuked. When no one is ever rebuked it creates the kind of culture they had in Crete or in the other community groups and organizations I mentioned before. We don't like to be rebuked and we don't like to give rebukes, but its absence will create a culture of people who claim to know God but deny him by their works.

I am always amazed at how God uses his word. Someone told me that I hammered him with my sermon last week. It's funny because I don't even recall that I gave a rebuke in my message last Sunday and certainly not a sharp rebuke. But the power of the word itself is often its own rebuke, if we have ears to hear.

- Rebuking is for the purpose of "making them sound in the faith."

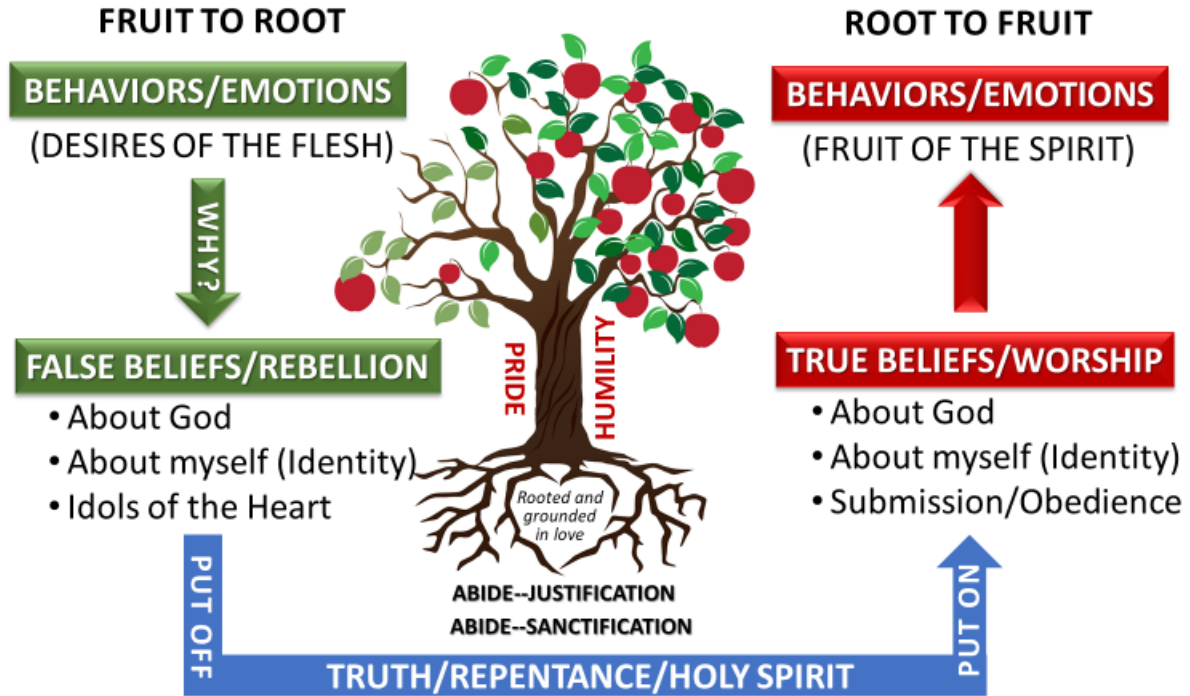
This is the very purpose of a rebuke. "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." Guess how the ISV translates this verse? "Refute them sharply so that they may become healthy in the faith." Remember that sound doctrine is healthy doctrine and here we have the same root word. Rebukes make your faith more healthy. Part of the reason healthy doctrine is good for you is because rebukes lead to healthy faith.

- Rebuking is a form of teaching

Rebuking and teaching are opposites in the sense that one is "negative" and one is "positive." But in reality, rebuking is just another form of teaching and training. A rebuke teaches you because it applies truth to your specific situation.

Let me give you an example of how healthy doctrine is good for us. This week in men's study Hebrews 10:17 was part of the passage we were studying. "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." The author was quoting Jeremiah 31. This is doctrine and here's how it can teach and rebuke us. Many people struggle with self-condemnation. Even though our heads tell us we are forgiven our relationship with the Lord can feel we still need to earn his love for

us. Let's run our experience and this doctrine through this process I showed you a few weeks ago. You start on the left side, the "fruit" of your life, which in this case is feelings of condemnation. You feel like you can't measure up to God's standards. You feel like when you sin you are more likely to receive condemnation from God rather than forgiveness.



Those are the emotions you often experience. Why do you have these feelings? Why is this such a common occurrence? When this happens you need to trace your feelings down to your belief about God. If you feel condemned by God, what do you believe about him at that moment? You may believe that he hasn't forgiven you. You might believe that he can't forgive you or won't forgive you. You may not think that these are your beliefs but if you feel condemned, then you must believe something like this.

Now you apply the Lord's truth, his doctrine to your feelings. "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." You have been taught this 50 times but it doesn't stick. So now you need to receive this truth as a rebuke. You need to repent of your unbelief and beg God to drill this doctrine down into your heart. Jesus made us beautiful by his saving work so that we can make him look more beautiful through our lives.

I'd like to close with the same song that impacted me so much this week. [Is He Worthy?](#)

Rich Maurer
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¹ Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Pastoral Epistles* (Vol. 46, p. 397). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/victorlipman/2016/06/09/the-most-ethical-and-unethical-countries-to-do-business-in/#5d8eb4257230>