

Apparently, there is a small crisis in San Diego, CA. There is no space in San Diego County to build a larger airport....an airport to meet the demands of the population there. The single runway at the current airport is the busiest runway in the country, and one of the most dangerous.

So, I was reading an article this week about an idea that has been put forward to build a floating airport 5 or 10 miles off the coast:

- 3 sq miles
- 2 runways
- 2 million feet of office space below
- harvest energy from wind, waves, and ocean currents

Sounds awesome, doesn't it?

But as I'm reading, I'm thinking.....just seems like....somewhere along the way, there's got to be some fatal flaw....some, something that will prevent the idea from ever coming to fruition.

Now, over the last several weeks we have been looking at a blue print even more marvelous than the blue print for a floating airport: God's grand scheme for the church.

- We've seen his wisdom.
- We've felt it at work in our own church
- and in me at least, a bit of a dream has birthed, to really see this more and more growing in our church.

Is there a fatal flaw? Is there something that could keep the plan from being fully realized?

Let's zoom over than at 30k feet quickly.

The plan begins with our **Risen Captain**, the Lord Jesus Christ. After he defeated death through resurrection, verse 11 says that **he ascended**. When he ascended, verse 8 says that he led a **train of captives**, all commissioned to bring their captain glory with their lives.

But he did not just tell those captives to bring their own weapons and tools. He **equipped them**.

**Verse 7 says that gifts of grace** were given to each of us....tools for our task if you will.....these are the spiritual gifts.

And then verse **11 comes in and says that he then gave the apostles**, etc. to the church in order to train the saints in how to most effectively use what God had given them.

In the body metaphor that Paul uses, Christ is the head.....saints...the captives in the Jesus' train are members of the body.

And in the body, the leaders are **working to equip**, and the **saints are working** to do ministry....they are **speaking the truth in love** to one another....they are **connected** to one another....they are **building** one another up.

All of this **less for their own individual development**, but more importantly so that the whole body builds itself up in love....and of course ultimately this is for the **glory of God**.

If all of this is churning along successfully enough....., **the personality and character of Christ is put on display in the church**, and **the world sees** something that is different and **more captives are added** to the captives train.

That is the **blue print for the local church**. I rejoice in how we are seeing that **come alive in our church**. I feel like we are about **a good thing here, and I am very grateful for that**.

**SO IS THERE A FATAL FLAW?**

I don't know about a fatal flaw, BUT there's **something that could go bad**. There's a **danger lurking**. It's a fatal flaw, if we let it **gain any momentum**.

This danger **unravels the whole**. It **breaks down the foundation**. And it is waiting at the door.

**It's the Danger of Bad Doctrine**. That's the title; here's the text:

Read 11-14.

You see **truth about us, and the world, and God is the core** of what we are about as a church. If we are a body than truth about God is our **life blood**.

The way that the **leaders equip the saints** is by teaching truth. The way that the **saints do the work** of ministry is with the truth in their hands and on their lips. The **maturity** that we are aiming for is maturity based on truth. **The light** we shine is truth.

And if that **lifeblood is replaced** with **bad doctrine**.....the **body dies**.

When we use the word **doctrine, we are simply talking about a set of beliefs about God**. **Theology is the truth about God**.

Everybody has a doctrine about God.

- Some people believe he does not exist—that's a doctrine.
- Some people believe he's a grandpa in a heavenly rock chairs. That's a doctrine of God.
- Hopefully your doctrine of God is built on the gospel, as revealed in the Bible.

And what verse 14 says is that **if you do not understand the right doctrines about God than you are like a child.**

'so that you may no longer be children TOSSED TO AND FRO....'

**Children are marked by various characteristics:**

- First, a **child is marked by instability**: They are children, and so not be blamed for this. But like the waves of the ocean are constantly in motion and change, so it is with a child: easily tossed back and forth in their life.

**\*ill.\*** Just the other night our youngest **Benji was crying because** were not giving him his fair shake with the legos.

But then I show him a little piece of a donut....

And if we are not mature in the faith....its the same with us---**every time some knew teaching comes along**, that's the thing you begin to chase after....but eventually that wears out, and you are on to **some other glossy book cover**, with an overstated endorsement....and on you go....tossed to and fro.

And notice the wording here, "tossed to and fro by EVERY wind of doctrine."

**\*ill.\*** imagine a weather vane constantly turning as the direction of the wind changes.

The implication is that there is **new stuff floating across** the scene all the time.

It is a particular characteristic of children that **they like something new**: some new toy no matter how cheap, or unimpressive it may be, is a great fascination to a child simply because it is new.

**\*ill.\*** It is upon this principle that the entire greasy empire of **Chucky Cheese** has been built.

That's like the people **in Acts 17**....they were very fond of hearing some NEW teaching.

We get so much **mail at the church** office about the latest, greatest thing that is sweeping across the evangelical world.....how we have to have it. How it is the key that unlocks the door.

- **Well, notice a second thing about bad doctrine.** If you don't know good doctrine, than look what happens to you—**you get tricked**: "by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

You see, a whole lot of **bad doctrine looks awfully good**. There's an appeal to it; there's something in it that draws people. Otherwise cunning and deceit wouldn't be necessary.

**Romans 16.18** says this about false teachers, "For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by *smooth talk and flattery* they *deceive* the hearts of the naive."

The **Prosperity Gospel sounds really good**—God wants you to be happy, and healthy and rich. He's here to make much of you. Now let's worship and adore him. Let's praise him for his goodness to us. Doesn't sound too bad does it?

**Easy Believism Sounds Really Good.** Says this prayer; move one; you're good.

**\*ill.\*** I know you've heard this from this pulpit a lot, but much of what you find at the **Christian book store sounds really good**....the covers look really good....and smiling people may be buying it....but oh, how much of it, is trouble.

**I don't believe any of you are chasing after bad doctrine because you want to destroy what God is doing here.** I don't think we have wolves in and among us.

In fact, I think we've got a lot of **very discerning folks here**

But I still think **there is a subtle danger**. There's a danger that the **truth about God does not define and shape us** as much as a particular a **religious culture**.

Maybe you grew up in, or are growing up in a religious culture. Inevitably in this church, we create a certain culture. And the traditions and music and moral values of this culture represent Christianity for you far more than specific beliefs about God do.

For those in such a category, you are susceptible to the winds and waves of doctrine.

Each one of us has to ask, “what am I choosing when I choose to be a Christian?” What am I basing my life on?

It has to be **more than a certain way of life**; or certain **cherished traditions**. We need to be **basing our life on specific beliefs**...doctrines about God.

Of course there is nothing wrong with traditions. But being a Christian has to be about a person—the living person of Jesus Christ.

**Today, I want to answer two questions.** In the first question, I want to convince you to care about knowing and studying and understanding the most fundamental doctrines of the faith.

Doctrines like: like **atonement, justification, propitiation, Trinity**. Do you treasure those doctrines? Is your life built on them?

those are **not random, back alley doctrines**. We know God in the most basic ways as we come to understand those teachings of the Bible.

**In the second question** I want to **name some names** of bad doctrine I see floating around out there, that I think we are susceptible to.

### **1. Why does Good Doctrine Matter?**

One reason we know that is because the **NT hates bad doctrine**. The NT does not have a **cotton candy concern** about bad doctrine. It does not look at perversions of the gospel, and say, “well, to **each his own, I guess....**” Notice some examples:

**Acts 20.25-31**, Paul’s last words to the pastors in Ephesus:

“And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own

selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert.”

As strongly as he can, he’s saying to them: I taught you what was true. Now, **on your life, you teach these sheep under your care**. You protect them from bad teaching.

This is the **last time** that he will see these pastors. And the one thing he chooses to leave with them is not something about a **strategy, or a program, or how to keep up morale, or how to do outreach**, or anything like that. One thing: teach them the good doctrine; protect them from the evil doctrine.

A pastor’s job description can be summarized this way: **lead through teaching**.

Bad doctrine threatens the survival of local churches. Rev 2 and 3.

Now, notice how strong Paul’s words are for bad teachers in **Galatians 5.7-12**: “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and *the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty*, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!”

And it’s not just Paul....

**Jesus is just as strong**: he calls false teachers wolves in sheep’s clothing; and whitewashed tombs. They look nice on the outside, but inwardly they are full of evil.

Look these are strong words from Paul, and from Jesus. **They are violent....literally violent words**. I’m **not eager to be Mr. Negative, finger pointing**, we’ve got this down, and you don’t. But these words come from the **Son of God himself....the INCARNATION OF GOD’S LOVE**. And his strong words here are his love speaking....trying to protect you.

**Ok, so why? Why is this so important to God? Why is good teaching, good doctrine important?**

The reason that doctrine is important is because **doctrine is the way we come to know God**....not simply about God.....but to truly know God himself. To know his character and attributes.

Knowing doctrine is **not an end in itself**, but a means of a relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

We may be **building our lives on some god we've made up**, or on some idea that is opposed to the knowledge of God. And this friends, is a dangerous thing.

**Another reason that good doctrine**, known and cherished, and functioning as an avenue to our relationships with God is so important:

**JC Ryle**, “Mark what I say. If you want to *do good* in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply-cut, doctrinal religion. If you believe little, those to who you try to do good will believe nothing...The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men roundly of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look and live—to believe, repent, and be converted....Christianity without distinct doctrine is a powerless thing.... depend on it, if we want to “do good” and shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic weapons.”

**Good doctrine is the fuel that powers the engine** of the church getting stuff done in the world.

Daniel, “The people that know their God will be strong and do exploits.”

What we **believe about God has more to do with how we live**, than any other 1 factor in our lives.

**Doctrine does not prevent ministry.** It empowers it. Doctrine does not separate us from people, it breaks our hearts for them, and compels us to go out and serve them.

**So that we can grow in our love** for God; so that we can get good work done: let's put our thinking caps on, let's prioritize how we need to; let's do the hard work of digging in.

Dug Down Deep by Joshua Harris  
Knowing God by JI Packer

**Now, let me sound a caution about all of this.**

Because **what is the danger that exists in an increasing knowledge** of doctrine? *Pride. Pride waits to pounce on your mind's new discoveries and twist them so that they puff you up, rather than lay you down at the foot of the cross.*

Sadly, when many of you think of people that love doctrine you think of people whose character does not appeal to you.

- They are proud.
- They are self-righteous.
- They nick-pick at other Christians.

**\*ill.\*** doctrine is like blood (in your body...it gives life) (carried around in a sack...its just gross)

And the Bible **warns about knowledge leading to pride** in **1 Corinthians 8.1-3**: “Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.”

If your understanding of doctrine makes you proud, than you have grossly missed the point.

I love how verse 2 says, “If anyone **IMAGINES** that he knows something.” What is Paul saying there? He's saying that doctrinal knowledge that puffs you up is no knowledge at all. You imagine yourself to be special, set apart, better than.....but that is pure imagination. **You know nothing.**

1 Corinthians 13 says that if you possess all knowledge but lack love, than you are nothing.

**\*ill.\*** Francis Chan says that is like a **basketball player** that goes 5-for-5 in the game, but shoots at the wrong basket every time. And after the game, he's like, “yea, I am something, 5-for-5....I'm blowing it up out there.” But his teammates are saying, “**man you are killing us.**”

If you have knowledge w/o love.....you may think you are something, but its quite the opposite....you are nothing.

All that said—**true knowledge of good doctrine is the only means to achieving true humility.** We don't pursue humility at the cost of pursuing knowledge.

Because if we rightly understanding theology about God, and ourselves, we are going to be humble people.

## **2. What Bad Doctrines Need to be Avoided?**

**At some level I'm hesitant to do this, but:**

**\*ill.\*** Rod's story about the church with the faithful pastor who did not teach them what was bad.

Our critique does not indicate moral superiority on our part.

## 1. Therapeutic Moralistic Deism

I'm of course **borrowing this phrase**. I'm not smart enough to come up with it. Christian Smith penned the phrase to summarize his findings about the religious beliefs of **American Evangelical Teenagers**. He interviewed over 3,000 American religious teens, and he summarized their beliefs this way. His book is: "Soul Searching: The Spirituality of American Teenagers"

Here are the **five tenets** of the doctrinal system:

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

**Moralistic:** be nice, do your best, good ppl go to heaven  
**The point of Christianity is to make us nice.**

**Therapeutic:** God exists for my benefit, he wants me to have my best life now, God is in my life to give me peace of mind, and comfort.  
**The point of Christianity is to make us feel good.**

**Deism:** God is there....somewhere....and He'll help me if I need him.

It's not just teens that are prone to this; its all of us.

TMD **assumes a wrong problem:** unhappiness is not our most pressing problem.

Being enemies of God because of sin is our paramount problem.

TMD believes that **people are basically good**.

**TMD assumes a wrong mission for Christ:** to make us happy and good instead of right with God

**TMD pursues a wrong strategy for morality:** all around us we find Christians trying to be good by self effort; we see religious effort minus Christ.

Now **I believe in change**, and I'm for **moral instruction**, but that change must be pursued in light of the mercies of God. That **change must be drenched in the acceptance we already have from Christ apart from our performance**.

- That's why Romans 12 says, "in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice."
- It's why Paul spent 3 chapters telling us about salvation before in 4.1 turning and say, "in light of all of that, walk worthy."

### Ways to Spot TMD

1. Everything I've said so far about TMD sounds pretty good to you.
2. "Bible-teaching" includes **little digging into the text**, or the **Bible is just mined for quotes**...often taken out of context

The Bible is **not just a series of cliches** that sort of spur us on as we go.

Mainly, the Bible tells us **how man can be reconciled to God through Christ**, and then once we are reconciled to Him, we come to treasure him and are changed.

3. **The Gospel is assumed.** I think a great problem in our day is that the gospel is seen as something that **gets us into God's family**, but then once we are in, we are done with that....we move onto other things.

But Paul never stopped preaching the gospel to Christians.

- Romans...he wanted to come preach it to them
- 1 Cor 15—the gospel which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved.
- Ephesians
- Galatians—amazed that you are so quickly leaving the gospel for another, not as though there is another.....

**\*ill.\*** The gospel is an ocean—you never touch bottom...you just swim around in it your whole life....and yet a child can understand it...its a beautiful thing. But if its assumed.....you are moving toward bad doctrine.

## 2. The Cult of Health

It is **absolutely no secret that Americans in general are obsessed** with physical health: food, fitness, etc.

But what has me concerned is that **Christians seem to have little discernment** about the unbiblical ideas that are often part of the package when it comes to various **eating plans and exercise regimens**.

A couple of texts:

#### 1 Timothy 4

[7] Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; [8] for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Everyone knows this verse. **Simple point right:** godliness...the training of the soul is of utmost importance: its good for the here and now, and its good for eternity. Physical training, while not outlawed has limited value: it only helps you in this life.

#### Colossians 2.20-23

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— [21] “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” [22] (referring to things that all perish as they are used)— according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, *but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*

What’s here? **Exercises....diets plan....food choices.....activities.....they don’t help you train your soul.** In fact....they have a **tendency to create self-made religion.** They have a tendency to become something we trust in for who we are, and how we view ourselves rather than relying on the righteousness of Christ, which is an external, spiritual reality.

Ok, now let me try to **summarize those two passages** into one point:

The health of your soul, is more important than the health of your body. And the health of your body, does not create a healthier soul.

NOW in the REVERSE, the health of your soul can have a profound effect on the health of your body.

**\*ill.\***Just a personal example: I’ve recently lost some weight. I’m very thankful for God’s grace in this. But here’s the thing: I came to see that much of my weight

problem (physical) was a spiritual problem: I lacked self-control. So, I’m working to address the spiritual, and its overflowing to the physical.

So I’m urging you, **be careful to not insist on things about food FOR OTHERS, that are not clearly insisted on biblically.** They may be great for you. Great. Leave it there.

**\*ill.\***You want to go on the all-Spinach diet....and get your Spinach plucked from spinach plants grown in hyperbaric chambers. That’s fine for you. Please just don’t insist that we do that.

And **be careful about looking to various physical activities** as a way to get in tune with God. You **don’t get in tune with God through the endorphins** produced when you exercise or **by emptying your mind** of all thought.

You draw closer to God by meditating on his Word, and treasuring his Son.

#### 3. Anything that downplays the place of the cross

Our doctrine is **blood splattered.** There is no removing its offense.

It is offensive in two ways:

a. it is a religion of blood.

“we were ransomed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb.” (1 Peter 1)

“Jesus purchased the church of God with his own blood” (Acts 20)

“he secured our eternal redemption by means of his own blood” (Hebrews 9)

“it’s the blood of Christ that purifies our conscience from dead works” (hebrews 9)

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sin” (eph 1)

“Worthy are you....because you were slain....because by your blood you ransomed people from every tribe, and tongue and nation” (Revelation 5)

We will sing about the blood for all eternity.

For now we sing, **‘what can wash away my sin?’** Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow.....

**\*ill.\*** and yet all **around me I look at teaching materials**, children's materials, songs, sermons.....and there is no blood.

Teachers: **Please, don't try to protect my children from the message of the bloody, rugged cross.** Let them see him hanging their for their sins. Let them see his invitation from Calvary.....calling them to come.

All around us **we are seeing Jesus' ethical teachings valued over his work on the cross.** He's seen as a great example, but not cherished as a bloody, redeeming substitute for sinners.

b. the knife is in your hand. **He bled (that's already offensive enough) because of your crimes.**

Was it for crimes that I had done, he blood upon a tree. Amazing pity, grace unknown and love beyond degree.

If that blood for your criminal mind is not a sweet doctrine to you....than you may be serving a god, who is no god. You worship something, but its' not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus.

### Conclusion

Here's the sum:

Let's be a **thinking people.** Let's be people **of this book.**

Let's **not assume** the most important things. Let's **treasure** the precious, foundational doctrines of God.

Let's **guard the good deposit** of truth that's been entrusted to us.

And let's **leave it intact** for those who come behind us.

THERE ARE WINDS AND WAVES; SCHEMES AND CUNNING WOLVES.

Let's **cling to Christ;** make much of him; and live in the good of his gospel.

**You will be built up; this church will be built up. And God will get the glory.**