Sound Doctrine

1. Doctrine begins with Jesus Christ. He is the source of all healthy doctrine (teaching).

Paul said: "If anyone ... does not consent to healthy teaching, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, then he is proud and knows nothing. Instead he is addicted to questions and arguments about words. From this comes envy, strife ... "

2. Jesus' doctrine has to do with simple commands plus belief in some basics, outlined in the Scriptures

Justin Martyr: "Brief and concise utterances fell from Him, for He was no sophist, but His word was the power of God. Concerning chastity, He uttered such sentiments as these: "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart before God." And, "If thy right eye offend thee, cut it out; for it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of heaven with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into everlasting fire." And, "Whosoever shall many her that is divorced from another husband, committeth adultery." And, "There are some who have been made eunuchs of men, and some who were born eunuchs, and some who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake; but all cannot receive this saying." So that all who, by human law, are twice married, are in the eye of our Master sinners, and those who look upon a woman to lust after her. For not only he who in act commits adultery is rejected by Him, but also he who desires to commit adultery: since not only our works, but also our thoughts, are open before God. And many, both men and women, who have been Christ's disciples from childhood, remain pure at the age of sixty or seventy years; and I boast that I could produce such from every race of men. For what shall I say, too, of the countless multitude of those who have reformed intemperate habits, and learned these things? For Christ called not the just nor the chaste to repentance, but the ungodly, and the licentious, and the unjust: His words being, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." For the heavenly Father desires rather the repentance than the punishment of the sinner. And of our love to all, He taught thus: "If ye love them that love you, what new thing do ye? for even fornicators do this. But I say unto you, Pray for your enemies, and love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." And that we should communicate to the needy, and do nothing for glory, He said, "Give to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow turn not away; for if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what new thing do ye? even the publicans do this. Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where robbers break through; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for it? Lay up treasure, therefore, in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." And, "Be ye kind and merciful, as your Father also is kind and merciful, and
maketh His sun to rise on sinners, and the righteous, and the wicked. Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall put on: are ye not better than the birds and the beasts? And God feedeth them. Take no thought, therefore, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall put on; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you. For where his treasure is, there also is the mind of a man." And, "Do not these things to be seen of men; otherwise ye have no reward from your Father which is in heaven."

Justin was trying to explain Christianity to the emperor. This was his description of Christian teaching; "sound doctrine," if you will. Did Justin have the right idea?

The following is from Jesus himself:

Matt. 7:21-28

In this passage (which I didn't write out on the paper), Jesus makes it clear that obeying the commands in the Sermon on the Mount is plenty of teaching for his followers. The Sermon on the Mount is a directory for Christian living.

The apostle Paul agrees:

Titus 2:1-10: There are things to notice here
  1. Paul introduces this chapter by calling it "the things pertaining to sound doctrine."
  2. They are the sorts of thing covered by Jesus, very basic living and self-denying commands.

The rest of chapter 2 brings us to the "plus beliefs in some basics" that I mentioned at the beginning of this teaching.

3. Additional things besides adherence to Jesus commands (Heb. 6)

  1. Repentance from dead works
  2. faith
  3. baptisms
  4. laying on of hands
  5. resurrection of the dead
  6. eternal judgment

A. Jesus did not only teach basic selfishness and self-denial as found in Matt. 5-7. He had a lot of things that he taught in parable. A lot of those parables are prophecy, explaining what the Kingdom of God is like and will be like through the centuries until his return. (Such as the parable about the woman putting leaven in the bread and the parable of the mustard seed which grew into a tree that sheltered the birds of the air.)
B. Jesus also centrally taught about entering the Kingdom of God, which he called the Gospel (Mark 1:14-15). There is a lot he taught about the Kingdom, but that belongs to a different teaching. Let's sum up entering the Kingdom by saying that Jesus said that we must be born again to enter the Kingdom heaven.

C. This idea of being born again is central to the New Covenant. If you are not born again, then "sound teaching" is not for you anyway. Only the Gospel of the Kingdom, calling to you repentance, faith, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit so that you are empowered to obey is for you.

D. Thus Titus 2:11-14, the chapter of sound doctrine, goes on to say that it is grace that teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that it is Jesus' death and resurrection that made it possible for us to be his own special people, zealous for good works.

E. The basics from Hebrews that I listed are a basic outline of the Christian life. This paragraph incorporates all those basics mentioned in Hebrews:

When the Good News of the Kingdom of God and the arrival of King Jesus is preached, then the response to it is to repent of your dead works. Whether you thought your works were good or evil, it is time to repent of all you did outside the Kingdom of God. You should believe, be buried in baptism, leaving all your sins and personal ideas and efforts and works behind, and rise again into his kingdom. There you will be greeted by the laying on of hands, the church receiving you and imparting the Holy Spirit to you. That is followed by your life, which we will discuss in a minute, which will end with a resurrection when the voice of Jesus raises the dead. At that time, there will be an impartial judgment of everyone according to their deeds.

D. All those basics are covered in other teachings. You need the basics to go on with the healthy teaching that we are talking about. Before he gave that list, he told the Hebrews to whom he was writing that they ought to be teachers already. He then described mature believers in this way:

Solid food belongs to those who are mature, those who through practice have their senses trained to discern between good and evil. (Heb. 5:13-14)

Comment on Heb. 5:13-14: Those who have given themselves to living righteously will know how to teach others to live righteously. They will be able to teach about pitfalls, temptations, how to overcome weaknesses, how to keep our eyes on Jesus, how to be empowered by the Spirit in difficult circumstances, how to overcome bad habits, and sins that spring from lusts like greed, lust, pride, and anger. All such teaching is "sound doctrine"

E. Healthy teaching is any teaching that equips you to love, to be separate from the world, to deny yourself, to love giving more than you love money, to care about others
more than yourself, to be sensible and responsible in your family and in the church, to live as a solid testimony to the world, and to sum all those things up, to love God, to love one another, and to serve everyone.

1. Sermon on the Mount
2. 1 Tim. 1:5 – all teaching should lead to love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith
3. 2 Tim. 3:16 - Purpose of the Scripture is to equip men for good works
4. Tit. 2:11-14 – Jesus died to obtain a people zealous for good works
5. Tit. 3:8 – A faithful saying that should be affirmed constantly is that God's people should be careful to maintain good works

4. What "sound doctrine" is not:

   A. This is way too difficult to draw a line
   B. We can be sure that the timing of the rapture and other things not clearly addressed by Scripture are not part of healthy teaching.
   C. We can be sure that any teaching that allows disobedience to commands of Jesus and the apostles is not healthy teaching.
   D. Any teaching that divides the church is almost certainly unhealthy.
   E. Teaching that God does not want to save everyone. Your teaching about predestination may be awesome, but if it ends with God not wanting to save everyone, it is false, divisive, and hinders the conversion of the lost.
   F. Some examples of unhealthy teaching that promotes disobedience are:
      1. Going to heaven apart from works. It's clearly false, and it allows many to continue in sin without fear. It is specifically spoken against in Jude 4, where Jude warns us about those who turn the grace of God into a license for sin.

5. There are specific things contrasted with sound doctrine

   A. Basically all the works of the flesh
      1 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:10-16; 2 Tim. 4:2-4; 1 Jn. (whole book)
   B. Prosperity preaching (1 Tim. 6:4-10)
   C. Endless genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4; Tit. 3:9)
   D. Arguments and striving about the Law (Tit. 3:9)
   E. Not teaching servants to submit and masters to be kind (1 Tim. 6:1-3)
   F. Divisive doctrines, teaching things that divide the body
      Rom. 16:17-18; Tit. 3:10-11

6. The reason all the above is true is because on the last day, after you are raised from the dead, when you face the judgment, only what you did is going to matter:

   A. Matt. 25:31-46
   B. 1 Pet. 1:17
   C. 2 Cor. 5:10-11
   D. Rev. 3:4-5
This one is particularly important because it lets you know that your church membership and your Christianity is not enough. It has to have produced good works, which is why you should be careful to maintain good works (Tit. 3:8). If you don’t know how, see those mature brothers mentioned in Hebrews 5:14.

7. Advanced teaching

A. It is a good thing to study the deeper things of God, as long as it does not get in the way of the teaching and practice of good works, denying yourself, taking care of the poor, the widows, the orphans, loving your wife, raising godly children, etc.

From Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*: But as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shineth everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth. Nor will any one of the rulers in the Churches, however highly gifted he may be in point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these (for no one is greater than the Master); nor, on the other hand, will he who is deficient in power of expression inflict injury on the tradition. For the faith being ever one and the same, neither does one who is able at great length to discourse regarding it, make any addition to it, nor does one, who can say but little diminish it.

It does not follow because men are endowed with greater and less degrees of intelligence, that they should therefore change the subject-matter [of the faith] itself, and should conceive of some other God besides Him who is the Framer, Maker, and Preserver of this universe, (as if He were not sufficient for them), or of another Christ, or another Only-begotten. But the fact referred to simply implies this, that one may [more accurately than another] bring out the meaning of those things which have been spoken in parables, and accommodate them to the general scheme of the faith; and explain [with special clearness] the operation and dispensation of God connected with human salvation; and show that God manifested longsuffering in regard to the apostasy of the angels who transgressed, as also with respect to the disobedience of men; and set forth why it is that one and the same God has made some things temporal and some eternal, some heavenly and others earthly; and understand for what reason God, though invisible, manifested Himself to the prophets not under one form, but differently to different individuals; and show why it was that more covenants than one were given to mankind; and teach what was the special character of each of these covenants; and search out for what reason "God hath concluded every man in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all; "and gratefully describe on what account the Word of God became flesh and suffered; and relate why the advent of the Son of God took place in these last times, that is, in the end, rather than in the beginning [of the world]; and unfold what is contained in the Scriptures concerning the end [itself], and things to come; and not be silent as to how it is that God has made the Gentiles, whose salvation was despaired of, fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers with the saints; and discourse how it is that "this mortal body shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on
incorruption; " and proclaim in what sense [God] says, "'That is a people who was not a people; and she is beloved who was not beloved; " and in what sense He says that "more are the children of her that was desolate, than of her who possessed a husband." For in reference to these points, and others of a like nature, the apostle exclaims: "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

B. Advanced teaching is great until it causes division, at which time you should be admonished and then put out if you do not heed the admonishment.

Personal: For the record, I have always followed this. Whenever I have gained a place in a congregation so that I was asked to teach, my teaching was always submitted to the leadership of the church. Even if I didn't particularly respect the leader, I nonetheless treated him with respect. I directed any teaching that disagreed with his teaching to him first, and if he rejected it, then I did not teach it where that person led. I have left a church over issues like that, not really believing it to be a church, but I was always careful not to split that church, nor even to take "followers" with me when I left. Division is way at the top of the list of things God does not like. See John 17 for the reasons.

C. Some things that are very important, but we have not been given the freedom to divide over: (These things make great discussion bait: just how important are they?)

1. Describing the Atonement
2. End times arguments
3. Our understanding of the Trinity
4. Sabbath keeping
5. Food (specifically we're told not to divide over this – Rom. 14)
6. Whether the church is allowed to sponsor orphanages
7. Who is chosen as leader (this was the first issue that divided the church)
8. Our unwillingness to submit to a leader
9. Lots of other things that we have divided over
10. Add your own
RESEARCH ON THE WORD DOCTRINE IN SCRIPTURE

Used two words: didache, didaskalia (Strong's 1319 & 1322

Matt 7:28
Matt: 15:9 didaskalia – bad teaching, commandments of men
Matt. 22:33 (overcome Pharisees/Sadducees; Resurrection & eternal life)
Mk 1:22 unspecified
Mk 1:27 authority over demons
Mk 4:2 parables (specifically sower parable)
Mk. 7:7 didaskalia – same as Matt 15:9
Mk 11:18 God's house is a house of prayer
Mk 12:38 – Here and in other places didache is not just the things he taught, but also the actual act of teaching: "He said to them in his teaching ... ".
Lk 4:32: not specified, but people were astonished because his word was with power
Jn 7:16-17 – Jesus' doctrine comes from the Father and if we want to know if it is true we must do the Father's will
Jn. 18:19 – High priest asked about Jesus' disciples and doctrine, and he said all of it was public, none secret
Acts 2:42 – Church followed apostles' doctrine
Acts 5:28 – preaching about Jesus called doctrine by Jewish leaders
Acts 13:12 – Blinding of Elymas the sorcerer called doctrine
Acts 17:19 – Men at Areopagus wanted to know about Paul's doctrine
Rom. 6:17 – has to do with dying to sin and living to righteousness of God
Rom. 12:7 didaskalia – if you have the gift, be diligent in teaching
Rom. 15:4 didaskalia – The thing written before are for our comfort and teaching. Context is stronger bearing with the weaker and not looking out for themselves
Rom. 16:17 – People who cause offenses contrary to the doctrine we have learned are to be cut off. Causing offenses is what is against the doctrine.
1 Cor. 14:6,26 – general reference to teaching
Eph. 4:14 – Beware of false didaskalia ... it's unspecified
Col. 2:22 – Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle have no value against the flesh because they have to do with the commandments and didaskalia of men
1 Tim. 1:10 – fornicators, homosexuals, slave-traders, and liars are against healthy didaskalia
1 Tim 4:1 – In the last days people will listen to didaskalia of demons (lying and teachings about food
1 Tim. 4:6 – If you remind the brethren that all foods are good if received with thanksgiving and prayer, you'll be a good servant,, nourished by words of faith and healthy doctrine
1 Tim. 4:13 – Reading, exhorting, didaskalia is what Timothy was supposed to be doing until Paul came
1 Tim. 4:16 – give yourself to thinking about the Scriptures, your gifting, the didaskalia
1 Tim. 5:17 – The elders who rule well get double honor especially those laboring in word and didaskalia
1 Tim. 6:1 – servants should honor their masters so that God and his didaskalia are not blasphemed
1 Tim. 6:3 – If anyone teaches other than (context is slaves and masters) and does not consent to the healthy words of Jesus and to the didaskalia that is according to godliness, then he's mentally ill.

2 Tim. 3:10 – The traitors, rebellious, ungrateful, and fierce people of the last days will not proceed, but Timothy has known Paul's didaskalia, manner of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance.

2 Tim. 3:16-17 – The Scriptures are for didaskalia, reproof, correction, paideea in righteousness, so that the disciples will be completely equipped for good works.

2 Tim. 4:2 – Exhort with doctrine.

2 Tim. 4:3 – There will come a time that people will not endure healthy didaskalia, but they will heap up didaskaloi for themselves.

Tit. 1:9 – An elder should be able to "hold fast the faithful word" so that with sound doctrine he may exhort and silence gainsayers.

Tit. 2:1 – speak the things which belong to healthy didaskalia, rest of chapter explains this.

Tit. 2:7 – Titus himself in his didaskalia should show himself uncorrupted, honorable, and sincere.

Tit. 2:10 – servants shouldn't "purloin" so that the didaskalia of God our Savior should be adorned.

Heb. 6:2 – foundational teachings:

- repentance from dead works
- faith
- baptisms
- laying on of hands
- resurrection of the dead
- eternal judgment

We go on from there to perfection.

Heb. 13:8 – Don't be carried about by diverse and strange doctrines because it is good for the heart to be established by grace, not by food (context Jewishness).

2 Jn. 7-9 – We have to be careful not to lose the things we've done, so we don't lose the reward. Whoever transgresses and does not remain in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who remains in the doctrine (teaching) of Christ has Father and Son.

2 Jn. 10 – Don't receive anyone who does not bring this doctrine into your house.

Rev. 2:14 – doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block in front of Israel, eating things sacrificed to idols and fornication.

Rev. 2:15 – doctrine of the Nicolaitans: probably wife-swapping; equated with doctrine of Balaam.

Rev. 2:24 – Referring to doctrine of Jezebel, which is same as Balaam and Nicolaitans.