

How to Consider and Research Controversial Doctrines

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What do you do when faced with verses and doctrines that seem to conflict and/or are controversial?

Here are some practical Biblical steps towards knowing what you believe and why:

1st – Pray and ask for discernment. Ask that your personal experiences, emotions, feelings and even what you have been taught be set aside to ensure it is God's Word alone that guides you.

2nd – Read the verse(s) in question and ask yourself if this is the primary place in Scripture that this doctrine is established?

Take a step back and read the introduction to the book as well as the outline to get a feel for the intent and primary message that the writer is conveying. Often when we see the context, it becomes clearer that a verse is being used in a complimentary role rather than as the primary doctrinal statement.

If this is NOT the primary place to establish that doctrine/belief, ask why is it there? How does that verse support the main theme? Who specifically is being spoken to and for what intent?

3rd – There are too many valuable resources readily available not to dig deeper by reading a *trusted* commentary on that verse. Start with expository teaching methods and then consider using topical approaches. Expository teaching means:

A teaching technique that explains Scripture “*verse by verse*” from a historical, grammatical, cultural and geographical prospective.

Expository preaching differs from topical preaching in that it concentrates on a specific text and discusses topics covered therein, whereas topical preaching concentrates on a specific topic and references texts covering the topic. Both are valuable.

In this approach, Scripture is given preeminent over all other sources and authorities. *Sola Scriptura* means Scripture alone! Scripture interprets Scripture.

4th – At some point it may become highly significant to look at individual words and/or the verse in the original language. There are many free resources on line and potentially in the Church to do this without having to learn Greek or Hebrew.

5th – Realize that to pick a “side” is not always the right answer. Many of the “sides” are not really sides at all but are actually intertwined somehow beyond our fallen human logic. God’s ways and understanding is so much higher than we can ever grasp.

6th – Ask a trusted and mature believer(s)!

7th – Ultimately, accept what the Bible says even if you don’t understand or agree...it maybe a mystery.

Be patient! It may take years to process emotionally, spiritually, and mentally.

Remember it is God who teaches us: Ps 94:12, 25:12, 119; John 6:45, 8:31-32, 47, 10:2-6; Eph 4:20-21; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 John 2:27; Is 54:13; 1 Cor 2:11-16.

Doctrine is incredibly important and should not be sacrificed for peace and unity. The truth is worth knowing and proclaiming. It is commanded.

THIS STUFF ISN’T EASY! So don’t be discouraged but rather stay in the Word and seek to understand it. Be obedient by “abiding” (staying and remaining, John 15:7-10) in Him through His word and keeping His commandments.