

'Let the Men be Discerning' Supplement

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Book: *Let the Men be Men* by Chris Mueller

Chapter #7: Let the Men be Discerning (The Lens of Pure Doctrine)

Scripture: "with purity in doctrine" (Titus 2:7)

Summary of Chapter #6 'Let the Men be Examples'

1. **Previously in chapter 6 and 'Let The Men Be Examples' we looked at the subject of our example through good works.** Good works are important for the Christian life. And to be clear, they are certainly not the foundation of our salvation; for salvation from the judgment to come is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Good works, rather, are the flow-on effect, the fruit of salvation, not the root. Chris says, "*In the race of the Christian life, Jesus Christ calls upon men to set the pace by living a life marked by good works. God commands each of his men to be a model for others to follow.*"
2. **Some of the motivations we looked at that God gives us for good works,** are 1) as PROOF OF OUR FAITH, 2) OUR PURPOSE AS CHRISTIANS, such as Ephesians 2:10 "*For we are His workmanship (our election), created in Christ Jesus for good works (his purpose), which God prepared beforehand (his sovereign working through us) so that we would walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10), and 3) the COMING JUDGMENT DAY, in which as believers we will have to give an account of our lives (not to be confused with the judgment of the unsaved).*

Chapter #7 'Let the Men be Discerning'

Introduction

1. **This chapter is all about discernment and purity in doctrine.** Discernment by definition means "*the ability to judge people and things well*". Specifically, Chris is concerned to show the connection between a Christian man's ability to show spiritual discernment of truth from error through his pursuit of pure/sound doctrine.
2. **One of the key outcomes from this session is that we would each be awakened to our need of personal spiritual development.** To illustrate, Chris use this story at the end of the chapter: "*Howard Rutledge was an Air Force pilot who was shot down and captured in the Vietnam war. His book, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* (Fleming Revell 1973), describes his captivity as a prisoner of war. The following excerpt illustrates what we have learned in this chapter: During those longer periods of enforced reflection, it became so much easier to separate the important from the trivial, the worthwhile from the waste. For example, in the past, I usually worked or played hard on Sundays and had no time for church. For years Phyllis [my wife] had encouraged me to join the family at church. She never nagged or scolded — she just kept hoping. But I was too busy, too preoccupied, to spend one or two short hours a week thinking about the really important things. Now the sights and sounds and smells of death were all around me. My hunger for spiritual food soon outdid my hunger for a steak. Now I wanted to know about that part of me that will never die. Now I wanted to talk about God and Christ and the church. But in the Hanoi Hilton [the prison camp] solitary confinement, there was no pastor, no Sunday-School teacher, no Bible, no hymnbook, no community of believers to guide and sustain me. I had completely neglected the spiritual dimension of my life. It took prison to show me how empty my life is without God. With all the freedom you have right now, what steps will you take to be pure in doctrine?*"
3. **And this is something for us all, not just ivory tower theologians!** Chris says, "*One of the most important qualities of a godly man is to be pure in doctrine. Unfortunately, most believers tend to think this quality is reserved for seminary students and pastors. But God's Word calls all young men to be pure in doctrine.*" That's right, this call comes to all of us!

WHY PURSUE THESE QUALITIES AND NOT OTHERS?

So why all this effort?

1. **The first motivation Chris talks about is out of response to what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.** Pursuing sound doctrine, at its heart, is about pursuing God and His truth. We do this as a reflex to what God has done for us in Christ by sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins and earning the righteousness we needed for heaven, that we could never ourselves. In other words, as Chris says, if God's grace has gripped our hearts, and you desire to live for the glory of God, then pursue God in every aspect we have considered so far in this book. Accept our unique call and role as Christian men, to be leaders, to be grounded, to be mature, to be sensible, to be examples, and now to be discerning through the lens of pure doctrine. We could put it this way, those Christians you come across in your life that have an incredible devotion to Christ and a life with an eternal perspective in everything they do are often those with a profound understanding of their sin, of the holiness of God and of the glories of Christ. They feel a great debt of gratitude to God, and this gratitude can be made deeper and deeper through the pursuit of sound doctrine.
2. **A second motivation to pursue these godly qualities is for the purposes of evangelism.** Committing ourselves to the principles of Titus 2:6-8, is a strong basis for becoming a powerful witness for Christ in the world. *"Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us."* (Titus 2:6-8). Our neighbors, our unsaved family, our co-workers, our rugby or sport team-mates, everyone we interact with that knows we are Christians are watching us, we would rather not do anything that might invalidate our communication of the gospel when we get opportunities.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PURE IN DOCTRINE?

1. **When I was in the US back in March this year, I remember going for a decent run one morning to keep myself fresh.** One of the men over there made a comment that I was quite disciplined to do something like that. Perhaps to some, getting up in the morning and going for a run or being regular at the gym and involved in physical training would seem like great 'discipline'. And maybe it is, but for those who regularly do those things, often it doesn't feel that way because they enjoy it so much! Often what starts as a difficult discipline becomes a routine and habit after a little while, we just have to start! The might be true for you with developing the habits required to grow in doctrine.
2. **Showing discipline in things we struggle to do consistently but need to is the real test of discipline.** And when it comes to the things of God, we are in a spiritual warfare. Have you noticed sometimes when you go to read the Bible that it just feels so difficult to get going? It's like you have to push a mental barrier to even begin reading or studying! And yet, we can easily and so frivolously waste so much time consuming content on the internet, watching sport, movies, YouTube etc. Why is that? Partly it's because there's a war in our flesh, and Satan hates it when Christians actually take the faith seriously and study the Bible. To be pure in doctrine will take discipline, make no mistake about it.

Q: When you take an honest look at the use of your free time, how well balanced do you think you are in ratio of wasted time to disciplined time studying the bible or reading Christian literature etc?

3. **What does it mean to not have pure doctrine?** Chris says, "*When a man rejoices in truth that he likes but rejects biblical truth that he doesn't like, he is not pure in doctrine. When a man mixes human reasoning and his own opinions with Scripture, he is not pure in doctrine. When a man rarely reads, studies, or applies the Word of God, he is not pure in doctrine. When a man thinks spiritual maturity will happen automatically simply because he attends a Bible-teaching church, he is not pure in doctrine. When a man treats public worship, ministry, or sacrificial giving as optional, he is not pure in doctrine. When a man expresses unrighteous anger verbally and refuses to apologize and seek forgiveness, he is not pure in doctrine. When a man says he hates adultery, fornication, and other deadly sins, but*

watches those same sins in entertainment or pornography, he is not pure in doctrine. When comfort and convenience are the main goals of a man's life, while he rarely puts forth any effort in his relationship with God, he is not pure in doctrine."

4. **And don't get it twisted, God isn't calling men who have family and work commitments to become scholars.** It doesn't take six hours of study a day to become a man pure in doctrine. It can be reading two chapters of the New Testament before you go to work and two chapters of the Old Testament when you get home. Maybe in the evening, once the kids are in bed, and you've spent some time with your wife, you spend 40 min studying a single book of the bible in a little more depth each month. Say you start on Matthew's gospel, every night you read another chapter alongside a bible commentary and take some personal notes as you go along. Over time, this discipline will compound to be of great profit, and it will get easier for you.
5. **So we would see just how practical this is, consider what Chris says:** *"When a door opens to share the gospel with the lost, he is ready. When a moral dilemma faces him at work, he is ready. When opportunities arise to lead his family in the truth, he is ready. When he enters into a relationship with a young woman, he is ready to conduct himself in a wise and holy manner. He lives according to the Bible, depending on and following God's truth."* In this way, the man pursuing pure doctrine is in a constant state of preparing himself for different situations he may encounter when he will need to rely on the knowledge he has attained through training himself in the Word.

Q: Discuss things that you have found work for you in developing in your discipline to grow in your doctrine that might be of help to others.

HOW CAN YOU BE PURE IN DOCTRINE?

It seems there are less and fewer examples of men who are pursuing this high calling of being sound in doctrine, and I mean ordinary men, family men, working men. How can we join them in this pursuit?

Pursue Truth

1. **The first step is to set in your heart to pursue the untainted, pure, unadulterated Word of God.** This means we also have to be careful who we are listening to and reading to help us understand the Bible, there are plenty of peddlers out there who publish books and preach sermons for self-gain rather than to really help people understand what the Bible says. A simple two-fold test is to ask yourself might help you to chose whom to get help from, does this person have a high view of scripture? Is the scripture, the divinely inspired word of God, entirely sufficient for the Christian life, infallible and inerrant? Second, is it clear they have a love for the gospel of Jesus Christ, Christ in the place of sinners? Christ the incarnate Son of God, who lived, who died, who was raised again, who is currently interceding on behalf of his people, and who is coming once more? You're starting in the right place, if the people we are using to help us show devotion to these two principles.
2. **We don't want the word to be tainted, 95% medicine and 5% poison is still poison to us!** Chris says, *"When you mix white paint with another color, the paint is no longer white. When you accidentally splash bleach on your favorite blue shirt, the shirt is no longer completely blue. When you add water to gasoline, its power is diluted, and the chances of doing damage to a motor increases. It is the same with biblical truth. Biblical truth is to remain unmixed. When you add human wisdom, secular business ideas, or psychological concepts to biblical truth, you destroy its purity, power, effectiveness, and clarity. It is no longer God's Word, but a distorted word. It is not living and active, but dead and lifeless. Thus, to be "pure in doctrine" is to keep truth untainted so it does not become partial truth (at best) or mere human wisdom (at worst)."*
3. **We don't need teaching made up of human ideas and empty philosophy.** We want to understand the text! And the interpretation of the text is the text in its context and as the authors intended it. It has real meaning for us to discover. So if you're reading, say, one of the letters of Paul in the New Testament, the question is not, *"what does it mean to me?"* but rather, *"what did it mean to Paul, and what did it mean to the people who first received it from his hand?"* We call the science of interpretation

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'hermeneutics' that is the methodology of interpretation. Chris says, "*Practically, you apply the principles of hermeneutics by asking questions like, 'What did Paul mean when he wrote Titus around 2,000 years ago while Titus was ministering on Crete as Paul's apostolic representative?' Determining the answer to that question will yield the correct interpretation, leading to pure doctrine.*"

Q: Why do people often give their experience more authority than Scripture, and how do we keep from falling into that error?

Seek Instruction

The Greek word translated "doctrine", in Titus 2:7 means "instruction". To pursue sound doctrine is to pursue instruction. Truthful instruction. What we listen to, read, think about, talk about, will affect the purity of our doctrine. We only have so much time, so we want to be dwelling on that which is true, God's Word, and that which can help us understand God's Word.

1. **Pure doctrine is a godly young man's foundation.** Think of Paul in Ephesians 4, "*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*" (Ephesians 4:14–15). The key to not being swayed about by every wind of doctrine, as Paul says, is to know true and good doctrine, so we can determine the counterfeit from what is true. Chris says, "*Like a huge rock in a stormy sea, sound doctrine is steady and unmovable. Our foundation of biblical truth is certain and unwavering. So the godly young man is not looking for new ideas but old revealed truth. You want to know what the apostles taught, not what some opinionated blogger thinks.*"
2. **Again, as we saw earlier, sound doctrine as a foundation is of immense practical benefit.** Take raising a family and children for example, "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*" (Ephesians 6:4). How can we raise our children in the instruction of the Lord, if we are ourselves aren't pursuing it to know it!? This is something young single men need to take seriously too.
3. **Pure doctrine is a godly young man's food.** We have to be nourished by the word of God, considering it is soul food, not simply as knowledge. Remember how our Lord Jesus responded to Satan's temptation in the wilderness? "*man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.*" (Deuteronomy 8:3). Just like a steady diet of junk food would make us put on 100 pounds, so too, how we feed our soul will affect us as well! So the principle is true spiritually, in respect to sound doctrine.
4. **We don't want to be infants of the faith.** As Paul wrote to the believers in the city of Corinth, "*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now, you are not yet able,*" (1 Corinthians 3:1–2).
5. **Pure doctrine is a godly young man's fight.** There's a battle for the truth going on. There is a time for heretical error to be sharply corrected. Paul wrote, "*holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.*" (Titus 1:9). We have to be prepared to fight impure doctrine, that which twists and maligns the gospel. Certainly, this does not mean die on every hill. There are genuine born again believers who differ over secondary and tertiary issues. But the more you learn and read, the more you'll understand those difference, you might even appreciate how those difficult differences are used by God to keep us sharp and hungry to learn more about the bible.
6. **What must be rebuked sharply is that which strikes at the heart of the faith.** The deity of Christ for example or substitutionary atonement, or the resurrection or the second coming, salvation in Christ alone. Chris says, "*The man who is steeped in Scripture and sound doctrine will not be overwhelmed by claims made by cults, false teachers, misguided bloggers, errant authors, and other contentious people. Instead, he will be able to confidently and boldly stand for the truth. Young men need to be discerning as to when to stand for truth and who to confront. Sometimes young men tear into God's*

sheep over some perceived doctrinal error, when patience, love and grace should be the motivation of their equipping and correction. But there is a need for young men to stand firm and do battle over truth."

Q: What are some specific ways you can seek instruction and learning in sound doctrine, and what practical steps will you take to do so?

COMMITTING TO DISCERNMENT

Chris now lays out some practical steps we can use to become a discerning man of God who views all things through the lens of sound doctrine.

Accurate Interpretation

1. **As Paul wrote to Timothy, we need to be accurate handlers of the word of truth.** *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15). Chris says, *"When a young man hears, reads, studies, or discusses God's Word, he is to be zealous about interpreting the Word accurately by intently studying its background and context, as well as how each passage fits into the entire doctrinal framework of the Scriptures. A godly man does not play fast and loose with the Bible but instead seeks to discover the author's single intended meaning in any given passage."*
2. **We need to understand that bible study and preparing teaching content from the word of God is hard work.** And it won't happen easily or fast! If you get asked to take a sermon, a short talk for a youth group, a worship introduction at church, even a Sunday school message, do some hard work in the text, even for hours. Get locked in to make sure you know what it says and what it means. Accurate interpretation is never going to happen if you neglect to prepare during the week and rush to prepare something the night before you have to teach!

Q: Every Christian, not just preachers, are teachers of God's word in some form or another, even to speak about the bible at all is to assume a role of interpretation, so we want to be accurate in how we present God's truth, what practical steps might you take on this point to assist you in your study?

A Godly Life

1. **We also need to pursue a life which is consistent with the doctrine we learn in order be discerning men.** James wrote, *"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."* (James 1:22). Jesus said, *"...blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."* (Luke 11:28). Chris says, *"Such a man is committed to telling the truth even when it takes humility and courage to share it with his parents or girlfriend. By his own convictions he puts in a full day's work at his job, even when no one is watching. He will correct a cashier's mistake by returning money not owed to him. Throughout each day and in many ways, this godly young man models Christlikeness."* The nature of sin, and our fallen natures is that the more we live in a certain kind of way the more we engrain that pattern of lifestyle as our default. This goes in both directions, toward Christlikeness and away from Christlikeness. We need to ensure we are not searing our consciences and habitually doing what we know to be wrong. We train the conscience through the study of God's word, that we might show discern in the truth of things, I like how John Piper put it in an article, *"Just like you may calibrate a clock or a scale that is a bit off, you may need to align your conscience with the standard of God's Word so that it functions accurately."*

Hunger For Truth

1. **We must be committed to pursuing excellence in our Christian lives to render ourselves as useful to God.** This doesn't mean we're perfect, it means we put Him first in the decisions we make, habits we form and where we spend our leisure time. To achieve this, we have to have a hunger for the truth, a deep desire to know the things of God. Chris says, "*Getting an A in school sometimes takes a tremendous amount of hard work. A man who is committed to purity in his doctrine will strive to get an "A" in his study of God's Word and theology. He meditates, memorizes, researches, takes notes, attends classes, and fosters discussion—all to grow in his understanding of God's Word. Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." The biblically-guided man experiences great satisfaction when his thirst for truth is quenched in the fountain of God's Word.*"

Biblical Authority

1. **Have you set in your mind and heart in resolve to allow the bible to inform how you make life decisions?** In other words, is the bible authoritative? One example might be, say you are offered the perfect job, you'll make twice the money you currently do, etc, but just one problem is you'll work every Sunday and therefore won't be at church and present for corporate worship as the Lord commands and desires for his church. This is not to show discernment or to exercise sound doctrine. Chris says, "*The biblically-guided man lives by the words of Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Does the Bible light your path? Do you allow Scripture to determine what you should and shouldn't do? Does your study of it teach you how to best exalt Christ? Do you allow the Bible to inform you as to how to invest your time, spend your money, what woman to date—or if you are married, how to love your wife and discern what should cause you to avert your eyes? Does God's Word settle your views on current issues? When you open your mouth, do you talk mostly about your opinions or do you speak about what the Bible teaches?"*

Time with the Lord

1. **When a Christian reads the bible, they ought to see at as a different experience and reality as if they were reading another book.** They must lean into the text along with prayer in order to see the face the Christ. We must spend time communing with God in his Word and thereby develop our walk with the Lord. We are made in the image of God after all, part of what that means is that in Christ we can press into the things of God in our minds and enjoy the reality of his knowledge and love. Chris says, "*Becoming a biblically-informed and biblically-centered man of God will not happen instantaneously. It will not happen at a single church service, nor will it happen without you putting forth the mandatory work of reading and studying the Word of God. It will take time and effort to become pure in doctrine. Growing into a mature, biblically-guided man of the Word is a process that begins with a fundamental commitment to developing habits (called spiritual disciplines). With the empowerment of the indwelling Holy Spirit, you can grow in your biblical knowledge and develop essential convictions, which in turn will fuel increasingly godly character and courage for ministry and witness.*"

Q: Select a few of the doctrinal questions mentioned in the paragraph under the heading "Commitment to Discernment" in this chapter. What would you say in those situations?

Q: Are there any questions you have or further comments about this chapter?