

7 Quirky ‘Doctrines’ That Should Be Debunked

Jesus said the truth sets us free. But the opposite is also true: Lies put us in bondage—even if the lies are spoken from a pulpit by a sincere minister or a Christian celebrity.

In my international travels I’ve sat in countless meetings and heard countless examples of bad theology. While traveling in Romania, for example, I discovered that women are sometimes told they cannot receive communion if they are having their menstrual period. (No one could explain to me how this prohibition is actually enforced.) In some Nigerian churches, it is taught that a pastor shouldn’t have sex with his wife the night before he is scheduled to preach.

These are extreme examples of twisting or misunderstanding a Scripture (usually from the Old Testament) to create a religious rule. But this butchering of the Bible doesn’t just happen in developing countries. It happens everywhere, creating religious superstitions that make us look silly to the world. Some of these concepts are repeated so often that they become a part of our Christianese lexicon. People nod and say “Amen” without realizing these statements have no basis in Scripture.

It would be impossible to list all of the quirky doctrines I’ve encountered during my years in ministry, but I’ll start with these:

1. The children of ministers must carry on their parents work.

David passed his inheritance to Solomon, and Solomon gave his scepter to Rehoboam. Then somewhere along the way some pastors invented the idea of a monarchy in the church—teaching that ministers must be succeeded by their sons or daughters. This certainly can happen. But nowhere in the New Testament are we

told it is a rule. Leaders are appointed and anointed by the Holy Spirit, not determined by family lineage.

2. Don't touch the Lord's anointed. David refused to kill King Saul when he had the opportunity because he feared God and waited for Him to vindicate him (see 1 Sam. 24:6). But this verse has been manipulated to discourage church members from asking honest questions about a leader's behavior or decisions. We are called to submit to our spiritual leaders, but it is not wrong to disagree with them as long as we have a respectful attitude.

3. Christians who commit suicide go to hell. This idea has created untold pain in the church, especially in families with loved ones who suffer with mental illness. The idea is that a person can never be forgiven of suicide since they can't pray for forgiveness after they commit the sin. But the whole message of grace in the New Testament teaches us that God's love is greater than our moments of weakness, depression or mental instability. If our salvation totally hinges on whether we immediately pray for forgiveness after every transgression, then we are all doomed. Jesus paid for our sins, and those who trust Him will enter heaven in spite of their frailties and bad decisions.

4. The husband is the priest of the home. I wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard this statement from a pulpit. Contrary to what many Christians believe, this is not a Scripture. Actually the Bible teaches clearly that we are all priests (1 Peter 1:9), and husbands and wives function together as priests for their family. It is a heresy to suggest that a wife must go "through" her husband to approach God. The Bible does say the husband is "head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23), but this implies connection and oneness, not domination or control.

5. Christians can receive "mantles" from other people. The prophet Elijah threw his mantle on his disciple Elisha so he

could carry on his ministry (see 2 Kin. 2:13). Ever since this isolated incident occurred, people have been asking famous preachers to pray for them so they can “receive their mantle.” Recently it was reported that some charismatics were going to the graves of revivalists to pray for their anointing to come upon them. That’s silly. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit imparts his anointing. Someone may lay hands on us, but they don’t have to be famous or have a big following. Let’s stop worshiping people and seek the Holy Spirit’s power instead.

6. “Jesus only” baptism. Early Pentecostals began a famous dispute during the early 1900s over the proper formula for water baptism. Some insisted that people should be baptized “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19. But a breakaway sect of “Oneness” Pentecostals insisted then, as they do today, that people must be baptized only “in the name of Jesus,” as Acts 2:38 instructs. And Oneness believers teach that people who are not baptized according to their formula will not go to heaven. It’s time to retire this hair-splitting argument and recognize that Christians are saved by their faith in Jesus alone, not by words recited at their baptism.

7. People with strong faith don’t suffer. The oldest book in the Bible is Job—the ancient story of a faithful follower of God who endured suffering. Yet today we have dozens of famous televangelists who tell audiences they can confess their way out of trials and tribulations simply with positive thinking. Some even suggest you can buy your way out of difficulties by giving in their “miracle” offerings.

Never trust a preacher who promises you a shortcut around suffering. We must stop promoting a false gospel that offers instant success, fame and wealth. Jesus promised we would have trials (John 16:33), yet He gave us assurance that our faith in Him would help us overcome in the end. Let’s preach the truth, expose the lies and break free from Christian superstitions.