**Classifications of Christian Churches**

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| **Church** | **Definition** | **Examples** | **“Christian”?** | **Scripture** |
| Orthodox (“straight doctrine”) | The fellowship of churches that teach and confess what the church has taught and confessed since the days of the Apostles, as normed and informed by submission to the Holy Scriptures alone. | Confessional Lutheran Churches (churches that subscribe *unconditionally* to the Lutheran Confessions and teach accordingly) | Definitely. This is what we mean by “The True Visible Church on Earth”, and the “One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church” | “He (the bishop/pastor) must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in ***sound doctrine*** and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9) Also Titus 2:1, 2 Tim 1:13, 4:3, |
| Heterodox (“different doctrine”) | Any church that, perhaps unwittingly, teaches false (unorthodox/unbiblical) doctrine, but, generally confesses the primary fundamental doctrines \* | Includes most Doctrinally Conservative\* Reformed, Calvinist, Methodist, Baptist, RC, EO, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc. | Yes. Their problem is they usually hold to “felicitous inconsistencies”, contradictions in their theology that deny express biblical doctrine. | If anyone teaches a ***different doctrine*** and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,…he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing (1Tim 6:3-4). Also 1 Tim 1:3; Rom. 16:17 |
| Heretical (Gk: *Hairesis –* “to choose”) | Any heterodox church that *chooses* to depart from orthodoxy, and thus may or may not generally confess the primary fundamental doctrines\* of Christianity. | Includes most Doctrinally Liberal\* Lutheran, Reformed, Calvinist, Methodist, Baptist, RC, EO, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc. | Perhaps, but only those who do generally confess the primary fundamental doctrines\* of Christianity. | “ |
| Cult | Those heretical churches that claim to be Christian but generally deny the *primary fundamental doctrines\** of Christianity. They may be Doctrinally Conservative\*, but justify departure from orthodoxy with the teaching of “Restorationism”. | LDS, JW, Oneness Pentecostals | No. Those who deny the True God or the Divine/Human Person or meritorious atoning Works of His Son for us have forfeited the essence of Christianity. | “ |

**\*** *see reverse side for definition.*

**How to talk about “Doctrine”**

***What is Doctrine?***

* Loosely speaking, “Doctrine” is *anything that is taught*.
* Strictly Speaking “Doctrine” is identical with “God’s Word” and thus *any teaching that has the authority of God*; including (and for us men limited to) everything expressly stated or implicitly taught in Holy Scripture.
* The Scriptures usually speak of “Doctrine” in the singular, because it refers to all the teachings of God, which cannot be separated from one another. To be sure, the whole is made up of parts (“doctrines”), but the parts are never independent of the whole (Sound “Doctrine”).
* *Sound Doctrine* is that which is rightly called God’s Word.
* *Pure Doctrine* is that which is God’s unalloyed Word, refined from all doctrines of men.
* *False Doctrine* is that which isn’t God’s Word, even though it is presented as such.

***Doctrinal Orientations:***

* Doctrinally Conservative: Having a fixed standard of recognizing God’s Word that *does not change* with the times. (Doctrine is *relative to a fixed and timeless standard*).
* Doctrinally Liberal: Claims that God’s Word must be *adjusted or accommodated* to the times. (Doctrine is *relative to the changing times*.)

***Classifications of Doctrine****:*

* Fundamental Doctrines: Teachings having to do with salvation (e.g. Creation, Redemption, Sanctification).
  + Primary Fundamental Doctrines: Teachings that must be believed to be saved and the cumulative belief of which constitutes salvation, (First 3 Chief Parts of the Catechism: e.g., Triune God; Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, Salvation and Final Judgment of Jesus Christ.)
  + Secondary Fundamental Doctrines: Teaching of the means by which salvation is delivered; (Final 3 Chief Parts of the Catechism: e.g. the Sacraments)
* Non Fundamental Doctrines: Teachings that have no direct relation to salvation, but nevertheless carry the authority of God’s Word, (e.g., six day creation; literal adam and eve; one man/woman marriage, etc.)
* Adiaphorous Doctrines: Teachings that should be useful in promoting God’s Word; but are not “God’s Word/Sound Doctrine” in and of themselves; (e.g. Liturgical Seasons; Festival Days; Historic Liturgy, Lectionaries etc.)
* False Doctrine: Teaching that is treated like God’s Word but isn’t. (e.g., “God just wants you to be happy”)