



*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

*Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them.*

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## Orthodoxy & Orthopraxy

1 John 3:16-18, 21-24a

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**Discussion Starter** (Choose one of these to get your group talking)

1. Which is more likely to catch your attention? Why?
  - What a person says (and how it is said)
  - What a person does (and how it's done)
2. Have you recently viewed an example of hypocrisy? How did the actions of the individual differ from his/her professed beliefs or position?

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(A discussion Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy may take on several forms. Some groups may wish to examine the scriptures mentioned in this morning's sermon. Others may wish to look at the life of Abraham as an example of the two. Do not feel compelled to look at all of these passages or limited to these alone.)

### From today's lesson

1. What is the meaning of the word "orthodoxy"? How does it differ from "tradition"?
  - a. Look at these passages where the word "tradition" is used in the KJV. How is the word used in these passages? 2 Thessalonians 2:15 & 3:6? How does this relate to orthodoxy?
  - b. Read the context of Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7. Would those to whom this was addressed see themselves as being orthodox?
  - c. Who is being addressed in Matthew 22:23-33? Why does Jesus say they are wrong? To what does he appeal for authority in answering their question?
2. What is the meaning of "orthopraxy"? How does it differ from salvation by works?
  - a. In the Sermon on the Mount, who does Jesus say should receive the glory for our good deeds (5:16)? How is this to be understood in light of what is said in Matthew 6:1-18?
  - b. Read Matthew 23:23-24 (you may wish to consider the context of the entire chapter) and consider what it has to see about the motivation of doing good. How does the reason for good actions guide them?

## **Abraham: An example of orthodoxy and orthopraxy**

1. Paul, in his letters to early Christians, held up Abraham as an example of the power of orthodoxy.
  - a. Look at Romans 4:1-3. What is meant when he writes “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness”? What did Abraham believe? How did this belief result in God’s declaration of righteousness? Did what he believe matter?
  - b. Look at Galatians 3:6-9. How does Abraham’s faith (belief) serve as a source of confidence for Gentile believers? Which came first, the promise or the law? Which is more important, faith or the law?
2. James, in his letter, presented Abraham as an example of the power of orthopraxy.
  - a. Look at James 2:14-19. What example does James use to call into question the power of faith without deeds? How is this similar to Luke 10:25-37? What does James conclude about a declaration of correct belief that there is one God?
  - b. Look at James 2:20-24. What relationship does James see between the statement, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” and Abraham’s willingness to offer his son Isaac on the altar (see Genesis 22)? What is James’ conclusion concerning orthopraxy (2:24)?
3. So, which is more important?

## **Application**

1. As a Christian, have you tended to emphasize correct belief over correct action? Action over belief? As you think about it, does one tend to give you a greater sense of comfort than the other? Do you ever feel you are lacking in one because of the focus on the other?
2. How does correct belief provide motivation for correct action? Can correct action help during times when you struggle with correct belief (doubt, etc.)?
3. What step(s) can you take this week to maintain a faithful balance between:  
Orthodoxy (correct belief)  
  
Orthopraxy (correct action)

**Abraham: a model of orthodoxy and orthopraxy**

A. Read **Genesis 15:1-6, 22:1-14**, and other passages about Abraham's faith. What is the relationship between his belief in God's promise and his actions? (You may wish to look at **Hebrews 11:17-19** for some additional insight into Abraham's thinking)

B.

C. Romans 4:1-12

**I. John's instructions on orthodoxy and orthopraxy**

A.

B.