

KUDZU



(Image Credit – Flickr User Robert Michalove)

If you should travel in the south, you'll see something that is pretty much taking over the landscape. It's called Kudzu. Here in the northeast we now have a host of similar plants: Japanese Knotweed and Purple Loosestrife to name but a couple. They're called invasive species.

Most of these plants which are now known to be invasive were brought into this country for noble causes. They were (and some still are) used in place of native plants for erosion control and landscaping; they found a fertile environment; and rather quickly got out of control. In some places, it's so bad that it's said that you have to close your windows at night or the Kudzu will grow into your home! Here in the northeast, a small patch of Knotweed will quickly take over a poorly tended patch of ground and then spread so quickly you can't keep up with it.

So what's an ecology lesson doing in the devotional column? Well, each of these invasive plants is a good illustration of what happens when close examination is not given to the details of something that's supposed to help us.

Often, what is really bad teaching comes to us in a package that's supposed to be helpful. Sometimes it's even promoted by folks with "Reverend," "Doctor" or even "Pastor" tacked onto their names just as the use of our invasive plants was once endorsed by well respected professionals—even government agencies. It might come in the form of books, magazines, CDs, or special guest speakers—even in churches.

So how do you know if it's good or if it's Kudzu? Just like the Bereans, we have to search the Scripture. 2Ti 3:16 tells us that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." If the wisdom given us doesn't stand up to the test of adhering to scripture, it's not the kind of wisdom we really want; it's Kudzu, it can, and generally will, grow out of control and take over.

One of the problems with invasive plants is that they have no natural enemies here. There are no insects, fungi or bacteria to kill off a percentage of the growth and keep them in check. It's the same with false doctrine that's being passed off. It has few natural enemies. It falls into fertile ground—people whose faith may be weak, or who may be struggling in their Christian walks for some reason; or maybe folks who are two or three generation out of church, with no basic knowledge of Scripture to guide them—and it sprouts. It sounds like it might be from the Bible, it might be phrased like good Biblical wisdom, might even have a few out of context Bible verses mixed into it, but true Biblical wisdom it is not. It might actually seem helpful, at least for a while; but even while it's helping people in some area of life, it's

taking them further away from the greater truths of Scripture (e.g. salvation), which are far more critical in the long run.

Unless those among us who know what is right speak up and denounce the error of the writings, the writers, and the speakers; this invasion will continue to grow unchecked. Kudzu and the others are almost unkillable. Only continuous work including massive doses of specific herbicides will get rid of it. The only way to eradicate bad doctrine is to call it what it is—WRONG—and apply massive doses of sound Biblical wisdom. It's the obligation of mature Christians to know their Bibles well enough to do that.

William "Bill" Pitcher
Northville, New York
First Baptist Church Interim Pastor 2014