

How can I know if something I hear is “official doctrine”?

This question can sometimes take some work to answer, but you have the tools to do it. If you wonder if a statement is official doctrine, try to find out where it came from. Is the idea in the scriptures? Has it been taught by the living prophets and apostles? Has it recently been officially published by the Church (such as in general conference, manuals, magazines, and Church websites)? If the answer to each of these questions is no, you can probably safely conclude that it's not official doctrine.

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, don't stop there. Keep comparing the statement to the scriptures and other official sources. For instance, don't assume that a statement made one time by a past or current Church leader is official Church doctrine. Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has given us a good rule of thumb on this: “The doctrine [of the Church] is taught by all 15 members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. It is not hidden in an obscure paragraph of one talk. True principles are taught frequently and by many. Our doctrine is not difficult to find” (Oct. 2012 general conference). **NE**



Is competition a bad thing?

Like so many things, competition can be either good or bad, depending on how you approach it. It's bad if you define it as “seeking to humiliate and destroy others” or “obsessively comparing myself to others” or “placing winning above everything, including my character, integrity, love of others, and covenants with God.” But it can be good if it's about coming together with others to bring out everyone's best or have harmless fun. When it's done in the right spirit, it can make winning and losing less a matter of ego and can help you take joy in the accomplishments of others (as well as yourself).

Whether it's sports, board games, a dance contest, or any other endeavor, healthy competition can sometimes enhance the experience for everyone. Unhealthy competition, on the other hand, can make everyone miserable. You can usually tell which is which by the spirit that accompanies it. (See 2 Corinthians 10:12–13.) **NE**