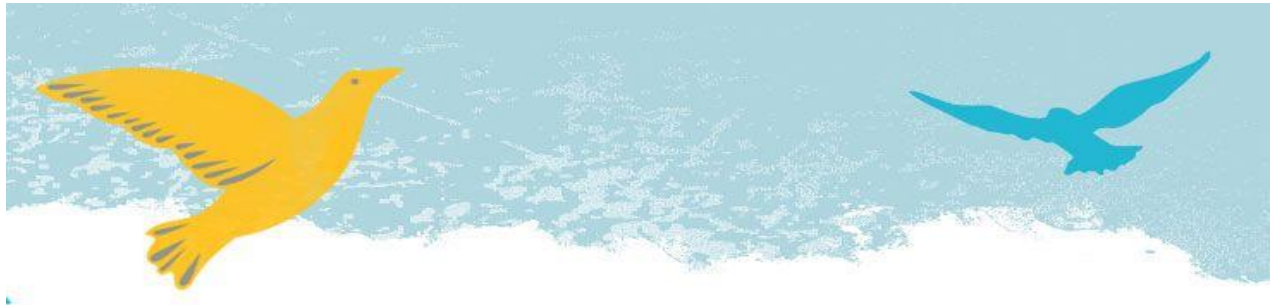


## Competing Definitions of “Mere Christianity”

**By David Lee Burris**



“The Moral Law, or Law of Human Nature, is not simply a fact about human behaviour in the same way as the Law of Gravitation is, or may be, simply a fact about how heavy objects behave. On the other hand, it is not a mere fancy, for we cannot get rid of the idea, and most of the things we say and think about men would be reduced to nonsense if we did.”



— C. S. LEWIS

*Mere Christianity*





FOR PRIDE IS SPIRITUAL CANCER:  
**IT EATS UP THE VERY POSSIBILITY  
OF LOVE, OR CONTENTMENT,  
OR EVEN COMMON SENSE.**  
**C.S. LEWIS**  
**MERE CHRISTIANITY**

THINKABOUTSUCHTHINGS.COM



“The more we get what we now  
call ‘ourselves’ out of  
the way and let Him take us over,  
the more truly ourselves  
we become.”

— *C.S. Lewis*  
Mere Christianity



**A PROUD MAN IS ALWAYS  
LOOKING DOWN  
ON THINGS AND PEOPLE;  
*and, of course, as long as you  
ARE LOOKING DOWN,  
you cannot see something  
THAT IS ABOVE YOU.***  
**— C.S. LEWIS,  
MERE CHRISTIANITY**

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**From Baxter's Church-history of the Government of Bishops (1680):**

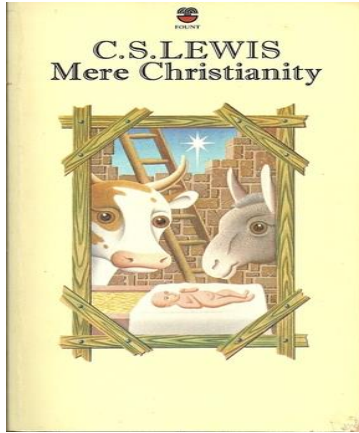
"I am a CHRISTIAN, a MEER CHRISTIAN, of no other Religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible where ever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible: But must you know what Sect or Party I am of? I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call Meer Christians by the name of a Party, because they take up with Meer Chrisitanity, Creed, and Scripture, and will not be of any dividing or contentious Sect, I am of that Party which is so against Parties: If the Name CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a CATHOLICK CHRISTIAN; not as that word signifieth an hereticating majority of Bishops, but as it signifieth one that hath no Religion, but that which by Christ and the Apostles was left to the Catholick Church, or the Body of Jesus Christ on Earth."

**From Baxter's *Treatise of Conversion, Addressed to the Ignorant Ungodly*:**

"I like to hear a man dwell much on the same essentials of Christianity. For we have but one God, one Christ, and one faith to preach; and I will not preach another gospel to please men with variety, as if our Saviour and our gospel were grown stale — For it is the essentials and common truths, as I have often said, that we daily live upon as our bread and drink. And we have incomparably more work before us, to know these better, and use them better, than to know more. The sea will afford us more water after we have taken out a thousands tuns, than an hundred of those wells and pits from whence we never yet brought any."

**From the Preface of Baxter's *Now or Never, or the Believer Justified and Directed and the Opposers and Neglecters of the Gospel Convinced*.**

"Whosoever holds all that is necessary to salvation, and is serious and diligent in living according thereunto, shall be saved, whatever error he holds with it. For if he be serious and diligent in the practice of all things necessary to salvation, he hath all that is necessary to salvation, viz. in belief and practice: and it must needs follow, that his errors and either not contradictory to the things necessary which he holds and practices, or *that he holds not those errors practically but notionally, as an opinion, or ineffectual cogitation in a dream, which provokes not to action; and in such a case the error keeps no man from salvation.*"



In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis argues for the logical validity of Christianity, defends the religion from its critics, and looks in detail at what the life of a Christian is like.

In the first part of the book, Lewis discusses the “law of human nature.” When studying human history, he claims, one is struck by how similar different societies’ moral codes are, at least at a fundamental level. Lewis argues that

moral law isn’t just an arbitrary human invention—it’s actually a real, timeless thing—invented by an all-powerful being who stands outside the confines of material space and time, and reveals itself to humans through moral law.

In the second part of the book, Lewis discusses a few competing theories about the all-powerful being’s identity. Some religious groups, the Pantheists, believe that the all-powerful being, God, is neither good nor evil. Pantheists believe that God *is* the universe, meaning that everything in the material universe is divine. Other religious believe that God created the universe, yet is distinct from it; thus, God is good, and wants humans to work hard to make the universe a better place. Christians also believe in the existence of an ultimate evil, the Devil. However, in Christianity, evil isn’t equal to good—evil is “spoiled good”; i.e., the perversion or corruption of goodness. Looking around the world, it is obvious that good has been corrupted into evil almost everywhere. Lewis then attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction in the existence of a good God who allows evil things to happen by arguing that God gives people the gift of free will.

At the end of part two, Lewis introduces Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of the Christian religion. The only way to be truly virtuous, Lewis argues, is to worship Christ. While there are many different Christian sects that worship Christ in different ways, Lewis argues that they can agree on the basic facts about Christ’s existence, and therefore can all attain salvation.

In Part Three of the book, Lewis studies the life of a good Christian. To begin with, Lewis proposes that morality consists of three different parts: harmony between people, harmony *within* a person, and constant vigilance in achieving a state of salvation. All virtues uphold the three parts of morality, and all sins contradict at least one of these parts. Lewis briefly discusses the four “Cardinal virtues”—prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude, and explains why they’re necessary for living morally.

Lewis argues that pride is the most dangerous of all sins, since it encourages humans to place themselves “above God.” He suggests that many people who consider themselves to be good Christians actually worship a “false God,” and secretly think themselves to be superior to everyone else—a state of mind that will lead them to damnation unless they’re careful. At the end of Part Three, Lewis discusses the three Theological virtues: charity, hope and faith.

In the fourth and final part of the book, Lewis turns to theology, the “science” of God. He analyzes the Holy Trinity, and the strange-sounding idea that God is both one thing and three. Lewis compares the Trinity to a **die**: just as a die “contains” six square sides, and yet is one three-dimensional object at the same time, so too does God “contain” three parts and yet remain one being. Lewis also tackles the apparent contradiction of an all-knowing God who gives humans the gift of free will—one would think that, if God knows everything, then humans don’t truly *choose* their fates at all. Lewis resolves this apparent contradiction by arguing that God exists outside of time, meaning that he experiences humans’ past, present, and future in the same instant, whereas humans have free will within time as they experience it.

Lewis goes on to write that, in Heaven, people lose their desires for earthly things, and thus, the basic components of their so-called “personalities” on Earth. But in place of their old personalities, the saved discover their *true* selves: unique, individual, and yet united in love for God. - *Internet Book Review, Edited*



“Human beings judge one another by their external actions. God judges them by their moral choices.”

— C. S. LEWIS

*Mere Christianity*



**"CHRIST SAYS,  
GIVE ME ALL. I  
DON'T WANT SO  
MUCH OF YOUR  
TIME AND SO  
MUCH OF YOUR  
MONEY AND SO  
MUCH OF YOUR  
WORK: I WANT  
YOU."**

**"NOTHING  
YOU HAVE  
NOT GIVEN  
AWAY WILL  
EVER REALLY  
BE YOURS."**

**"DO NOT  
WASTE TIME  
BOTHERING  
WHETHER YOU  
'LOVE' YOUR  
NEIGHBOUR;  
ACT AS IF YOU  
DID"**

**"A PROUD MAN IS  
ALWAYS LOOKING  
DOWN ON THINGS  
AND PEOPLE; AND, OF  
COURSE, AS LONG AS  
YOU ARE LOOKING  
DOWN, YOU CANNOT  
SEE SOMETHING THAT  
IS ABOVE YOU."**

(1) We might think that, provided you did the right thing, it did not matter how or why you did it—whether you did it willingly or unwillingly, sulkily or cheerfully, through fear of public opinion or for its own sake. But the truth is that right actions done for the wrong reason do not help to build the internal quality or character called a ‘virtue’, and it is this quality or character that really matters. (If the bad tennis player hits very hard, not because he sees that a very hard stroke is required, but because he has lost his temper, his stroke might possibly, by luck, help him to win that particular game; but it will not be helping him to become a reliable player.) (2) We might think that God wanted simply obedience to a set of rules; whereas He really wants people of a particular sort. (3) We might think that the ‘virtues’ were necessary only for this present life—that in the other world we could stop being just because there is nothing to quarrel about and stop being brave because there is no danger. Now it is quite true that there will probably be no occasion for just or courageous acts in the next world, but there will be every occasion for being the sort of people that we can become only as the result of doing such acts here. The point is not that God will refuse you admission to His eternal world if you have not got certain qualities of character; the point is that if people have not got at least the beginnings of those qualities inside them, then no possible external conditions could make a ‘Heaven’ for them—that is, could make them happy with the deep, strong, unshakable kind of happiness God intends for us.

“While the rule of chastity is the same for all Christians at all times, the rule of propriety changes. A girl in the Pacific islands wearing hardly any clothes and a Victorian lady completely covered in clothes might both be equally ‘modest’, proper, or decent, according to the standards of their own societies; and both, for all we could tell by their dress, might be equally chaste (or equally unchaste). Some of the language which chaste women used in Shakespeare’s time would have been used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century only by a woman completely abandoned. When people break the rule of propriety current in their own time and place, if they do so in order to excite lust in others, then they are offending against chastity. But if they break it through ignorance or carelessness they are guilty only of bad manners. When, as often happens, they break it defiantly in order to shock or embarrass others, they are not necessarily being unchaste, but they are being uncharitable; for it is very uncharitable to take pleasure in making others uncomfortable.”



“For a good many people imagine that forgiving your enemies means making out that they are really not such bad fellows after all, when it is quite plain that they are. Go a step further. In my most clearsighted moments not only do I not think myself a nice man, but I know that I am a very nasty one. I can look at some of the things I have done with horror and loathing. So, apparently I am allowed to loathe and hate some of the things my enemies do. Now that I come to think of it, I remember Christian teachers telling me long ago that I must hate a bad man's actions, but not hate the bad man: or, as they would say, hate the sin but not the sinner.

For a long time I used to think this a silly, straw-splitting distinction: how could you hate what a man did and not hate the man? But years later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life—namely myself. However much I might dislike my own cowardice or conceit or greed, I went on loving myself. There had never been the slightest difficulty about it. In fact, the very reason why I hated the bad things was that I loved the man. Just because I loved myself, I was sorry to find that I was the sort of man who did those things. Consequently, Christianity does not want us to reduce by one atom the hatred we feel for cruelty and treachery. We ought to hate them. Not one word of what we have said about them needs to be unsaid. But it does want us to hate them in the same way in which we hate things in ourselves: being sorry that the man should have done such things, and hoping, if it is anyway possible, that somehow, sometime, somewhere, he can be cured and made human again.” — C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, page 117

## **Primary Problem With The Lewis Version: The Common Hall**

“Much of the success of C. S. Lewis’s apologetics, and his writing in general, lies in its focus. Lewis knew how to precisely delineate a topic and focus his writing. This precise focus is evident throughout his works. In the preface to *Mere Christianity*, Lewis explicitly noted his purpose: “The best, perhaps the only, service I can do for my unbelieving neighbours [is] to explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times.”<sup>1</sup> He decided not to discuss differences between denominations or attempt to convert anyone to his own Anglican faith. Instead, he presented the basic teachings of orthodox Christianity — teachings he labeled “mere Christianity.”

Lewis had three motives for this focus: First, he believed that the disputed doctrines required a depth of theological and historical understanding that he did not possess.. Second, Lewis said that this type of writing, while important for those who are already Christians, would not bring unbelievers into the church. His goal was not to persuade those who were debating [affiliation]; rather, he wrote for those who did not know Jesus Christ. Third, he noted that many writers already addressed the controversial points, but few focused on the basics.<sup>2</sup>

This emphasis on common teachings makes Lewis quite appealing. Nonbelievers find that he presents the central beliefs of Christianity clearly. Christians generally find significant agreement with his presentation. Many readers, unfortunately, do not take to heart what Lewis said about the limits of his approach:

**I hope no reader will suppose that “mere” Christianity is here put forward as an alternative to the creeds of the existing communions. It is more like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms. If I can bring anyone into that hall I shall have done what I attempted. But it is in the rooms, not in the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals. The hall is a place to wait in, a place from which to try the various doors, not a place to live in. For that purpose the worst of the rooms (whichever that may be) is, I think, preferable.<sup>3</sup>**

The “common hall” of Christianity — the teachings and practices shared by all Christians — is not the end. Christians should rejoice in this commonality but not overlook the significant challenges that remain. Lewis encouraged those who have entered the common hall to seek a “room” where true doctrine and holiness may be found, but he gave little counsel on which room to choose. He left that task to others. He did, however, caution Christians to be charitable toward those who dwell in other rooms and those who had not yet found a room of their own.

## Challenges of the Common Hall

Lewis’s common hall is a helpful illustration of the common faith of the church, but it is accompanied by two challenges. First, who determines what is common to all Christians? No individual Christian can express what is common only in terms of his or her church or his or her own particular beliefs. Lewis, consequently, was careful to note that his definition of mere Christianity was not intended to be a summary of Anglicanism (though Anglican influences on Lewis’s work are evident), nor was it meant to be a complete summary of his own faith. Some have suggested that the *ecumenical creeds* comprise a summary of essential Christianity, yet not all Christians formally acknowledge the creeds. It may be simply that each reader has his or her own definition of mere Christianity through which he or she evaluates Lewis’s words; but, if the definitions vary, does a common hall truly exist?

It is clear, that Christians do not share Lewis’s beliefs on certain points: The authority of Scripture, the existence of purgatory, and the inclusivity of salvation. Lewis addressed other issues that are disputed by Christians as well, such as the nature of Christ’s atonement, the existence of human free will, the depravity of fallen humanity, principles of Christian [lifestyle] behavior, and the possibility of evolution.” - *Christian Research Journal*

## **Christianity Today Magazine Took Greater Issue:**

“At its best, mere Christianity can be summed up by the proverb frequently attributed to Augustine: “In essentials, unity. In nonessentials, liberty. In all things, charity.” Mere Christianity should also remind us to celebrate the oneness of all believers, united through our one head, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:15). However, mere Christianity will disappoint when it becomes a substitute for Christian faith: At its worst, mere Christianity shifts with the trends of praise music or the latest evangelical celebrity. Despite our best intentions, our theology and practice can become “conformed...to the pattern of this world” (Romans 12:2).

### **MISLEADING UNITY**

The phrase mere Christianity can be very misleading, suggesting we can act independently of traditions that guide our interpretations of the Bible. It’s quite American to position ourselves above tradition. Denominational churches do this by hiding their theological distinctives, thinking it will narrow the pool of potential parishioners. One church claims to be nondenominational instead of naming its tradition. The other fails to uphold its explicitly named tradition.

Sometimes churches go further than downplaying their unique beliefs. So-called divisive doctrines get pushed to the side as nonessentials, even when they are truly important. **Yet doctrines aren’t “dispensable” because they provoke controversy. We should not jettison disputed doctrines just because they can be divisive.**

### **DIFFERENCES ILLUMINATE AGREEMENT**

Even as tradition helps theology address contemporary issues, it also prevents us from succumbing to “the spirit of the age.” Insights from other times and places can bolster our fight against superficial belief. C.S. Lewis diagnosed the problem of eschewing tradition as “chronological snobbery,” “the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age.” Theological traditions open up the wisdom of the “cloud of witnesses.” Like us, these witnesses faced dire challenges in trying to teach and live out the gospel in an inhospitable world.”

## **Insightful Editorial @Touchstone: The Journal of Mere Christianity**

What Is "Mere Christianity"? *Quod Ubique, Semper, et Ab Omnibus*

by *J. Douglas Johnson*

Most readers of this journal know that our subtitle, *A Journal of Mere Christianity*, refers to C. S. Lewis's book of the same name. It is worthwhile, from time to time, to review what Lewis meant by this phrase. The answer is not as straightforward as it might seem.

The most common misinterpretation of what Lewis meant goes something like this: "Mere Christianity is what everyone who calls himself Christian today can agree upon without regard to those doctrines unique to their [denominational identification]." This is a common misinterpretation because, while it comes quite close to what Lewis said, it is nearly the opposite of what he meant. Indeed, in the preface to *Mere Christianity*, he explains the lengths to which he went to avoid found saying anything exclusively tied to or offensive to particular denominations.

Later in the preface, Lewis imagines "mere" Christianity as

a hall out of which doors open into several rooms [each representing a separate Christian denomination]. If I can bring anyone into that hall I shall have done what I attempted. But it is in the rooms, not in the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals. The hall is a place to wait in, a place from which to try the various doors, not a place to live in. For that purpose the worst of the rooms (whichever that may be) is, I think, preferable.

Once again, mere Christianity as a sort of common ground of agreement by all who call themselves Christians sounds like what Lewis may have had in mind, doesn't it? And so what prevents the church that hangs a rainbow flag over its entryway from claiming that it is simply another door along Lewis's hallway of mere Christianity?

If we imagine mere Christianity as an island of common ground upon which all Christians today can agree, then all power lies in the hands of the innovator, who only needs to disagree and, *voilà!* the island of common ground shrinks as it sinks a little further into the surrounding waters of modernity. All readers of this journal have had the experience of hearing some dullard brush aside the most fundamental teaching of the Church with the stock phrase, "But not all Christians believe that."

## The Deceit of Novelty

Then what, in Lewis's formulation, protects the Church from such perpetual erosion? The answer appears on the second page of his preface: "Ever since I became a Christian I [have meant] to explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times.

It is Lewis's invocation of "at all times" that shores up the ground on which we stand. It is not tradition that needs to keep pace with modern times, but rather modern men who must give up their innovations if they really wish to sit at the same table with the saints and apostles - with the early martyrs.

"If some novel contagions try to infect the church," wrote the fifth-century Gallic monk, St. Vincent of Lerins, "then [I] will take care to cleave to antiquity, which cannot now be led astray by any deceit of novelty." St. Vincent formulated what has since become known as the Vincentian canon: *Quod Ubique, Semper, et Ab Omnibus* (that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all).

Twelve hundred years later, the seventeenth-century Protestant clergyman Richard Baxter coined the term "mere Christianity," which Lewis adopted. "I am not writing to expound something I could call 'my religion,'" Lewis said, "but to expound 'mere Christianity' which is what it is and what it was long before I was born and whether I like it or not."

## The Arrogance of Time

Most readers of this *Touchstone* journal would happily choose to set aside our modern innovations in order to take our seats at the table of mere Christians, but the choice isn't as simple as it seems. Consider that to even speak of "modern times" — in fact, even to identify ourselves in terms of our time at all — is one of the new innovations. In the introduction to his book entitled *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Michael Allen Gillespie asks, "Do we even understand what it means to be modern? The premise of this book is that we do not." Gillespie continues:

[T]o think of oneself as modern is to define one's being in terms of time. This is remarkable. In previous ages and in other places, people have defined themselves in terms of their land or place, their race or ethnic group, their traditions or their gods, but not explicitly in terms of time. . . . To be modern means to be "new," an unprecedented event in the flow of time. . . . To understand oneself as new is to understand oneself as self-originating. . . . To be modern is to be self-liberating and self-making . . . something Promethean.

Modern men pride themselves on having been born in this era of anesthetics, indoor plumbing, and air conditioning, and not in the morally backward times of Viking raids, the Black Death, and "religious superstition." As the philosopher and politician Ryszard Legutko points out, this arrogance has corrupted our language:

The favorite expressions of condemnation always point to the old: "superstition," "medieval," "backward," and "anachronistic"; the favorite adulatory term is, of course, "modern." It goes without saying that everything—in both communism and liberal democracy—should be modern: thinking, family, school, literature and philosophy. If a thing, a quality, an attitude, an idea is not modern, it should be modernized or end up in the dustbin of history (an unforgettable expression having as much relevance for the communist ideology as for the liberal-democratic).

It is not the goal of *Touchstone*, nor of mere Christianity, to return to an earlier time. Lewis was explicit about this. (How can we attempt to break free from the innovation of defining ourselves in terms of our time by setting our sights on another time?) And yet, if we aspire to *Quod Ubique, Semper, et Ab Omnibus*, then it is the mission of this journal to **identify and disentangle ourselves from the innovations that prevent us from taking our seats at the table of mere Christians.**

This is no easy job, as no one man can free himself from all the innovations that entangle us today. But we would do well to remember that when we talk of "our time" we are participating in something that man made up around about yesterday along the scale of human history.

## Where the Good Way Is

In 1945, Lewis reminded leaders at the Carmarthen Conference in Wales that their business is to present that which is timeless (the same yesterday, today and forever—Hebrews 13:8) in the particular language of our own age.

[We battle] two of the great progressive presumptions of our age: (1) that we have the power to veto the ancient wisdom handed down to us; and (2) ironically, that we have triumphed, scientifically and therefore (somehow) morally, over those who came before us. We heed the words of the Lord to the Prophet Jeremiah:

**Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, "We will not walk in it." (Jeremiah 6:16)**

## The Common Hall Is Similar To The False Metaphor Of A Christian Vine With Numerous Denominational Branches

### Multiple Branches Of One Vine?



ONENESS LESSON	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE
"My Church"	Matthew 16: 18
"The Church"	Ephesians 1: 22
"One Body"	Ephesians 4: 4
"One Fold"	John 10: 16
"One Family"	1 <sup>st</sup> Timothy 3: 15
"No Divisions"	1 <sup>st</sup> Cor. 1: 10

## EXCLUSIVITY

- ❖ "Just as there are as many 'faiths' or acceptable systems of belief through which a person living today can be saved as there are Gods – and there is **only one**: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4: 4). - just as there are as many bodies of saved people or churches as there are Gods in heaven. There is one and only one. The reason is because the same text affirms, 'There is one body.'" ★

\* **Getwell Church Of Christ Bulletin 4-16-07**



## DENOMINATIONS ARE SINFUL!

Garland Robinson, *Seek The Old Paths Newsletter*

The devil has an unlimited number of tools at his disposal because he has no limitations. Everything is available to him. He is not bound by truth, honesty, veracity or fidelity. His way is the broad way, the wide way (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). He has an unlimited number of paths he can travel and he desires that all the men and women throughout history travel them too.

One of his most effective tools in the last 500 years is the system of denominationalism. He is using it to great advantage to cause men and women to lose their souls. It does not matter to him if people are religious as long as they are religiously wrong. He loves people who are sincere in their belief, people who are devoted to their cause, because he knows that sincerity and devotion are not enough to please God. The TRUTH has to go with it.

Jesus describes the devil as a liar and the father of lies in John 8:44. When he can get people to believe his lies, he's satisfied because he knows it hurts God. His whole purpose and driving force is to hurt God as much as he can. He delights in causing souls to be eternally doomed because he knows they will share with him in his eternal home.

One of the most effective lies he has ever told is to convince the masses that denominationalism is a vibrant and satisfying way to serve God. But the truth is, denominations are authorized by men, not God; God is not served by and through denominational churches. God is served by and through His church and His church alone. Ephesians 3:21 says, "*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*" First Peter 2:5 says God is served in his "spiritual house" which is the church.

## *Denominationalism is wrong and sinful because...*

### DENOMINATIONALISM MEANS DIVISION

The very thought and point of denominationalism is to be divided. Men glory in division. They relish the idea that people have a choice in religion. We have seen ads in newspapers and even on billboards showing how wonderful it is that men can be saved and then join the church of their choice – as if God gives men a choice, which He does not!

Since the words *denomination* and *denominationalism* are not found in the Bible, they must be defined from other sources. A denominational body is defined as “*a part of a whole or one of a series of units.*” Webster defines denominationalism as “*devotion to denomination principles or interests. Emphasizing of denominational differences to the point of being narrowly exclusive.*” “*An act of denominating, a value or size of a series of values or sizes (as of money), a religious organization whose congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices.*”

A quarter is a denomination (a part) of a dollar, but not the whole dollar. Each denominational church claims to be a part of the whole, but not the whole church. Many sincere and devoted people are involved in denominationalism. They are trying to go to Heaven and expect to get there *in* and *thru* a denominational church.

A good question to ask is: *are all denominational churches just different ways of going to Heaven?* No, they are not. The Bible teaches that denominationalism is both wrong and sinful. God’s Holy Word condemns denominationalism, which is division.

## DENOMINATIONALISM CONDEMNS OUR LORD & SAVIOR'S PRAYER FOR UNITY!

Denominationalism contradicts and condemns the Lord's prayer for unity. On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He prayed for His apostles, saying... "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That *they all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that *they also may be one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that *they may be one, even as we are one*: I in them, and thou in me, that *they may be made perfect in one*; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:20-23).

For even one denominational church to exist, negates the Lord's prayer for unity. It says, "Lord, I do not care what you want or what you prayed for. I love denominations and I am going to promote them throughout the whole world. I'm glad people have a choice. Your prayer is old fashioned and out of touch with the hearts and desires of men (political correctness). You are too narrow-minded and bigoted." Though we cannot imagine someone actually saying these words, they are exactly what is made clear every time one becomes a member of a denomination or prays for a denomination.

Proverbs 6:19 says God hates those who sow discord by dissention, strife, and/or division. But that is exactly what these denominations do. They foster and promote division.

God has set forth a **five-fold plan for unity** in First Corinthians 1:10. Denominations don't like it, but none-the-less, God's word is true and every man who contradicts it is a liar. This verse reads, "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

Therefore, God's plan is:

- 1) We all speak the same thing,
- 2) Have no divisions among us,
- 3) Be perfectly joined together,
- 4) Have the same mind,
- 5) Have the same judgment.

Philippians 3:16 joins in by saying, “...let us walk by the *same rule*, let us mind the *same thing*.”

Who's going to step forward and tell us God does not know what He's talking about and that it can't be done?

God's platform for religious unity in Ephesians 4:4-6 will work because it's His plan. It's His command! This text says, “There is *one body*, and *one Spirit*, even as ye are called in *one hope* of your calling; *one Lord*, *one faith*, *one baptism*, *one God and Father* of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

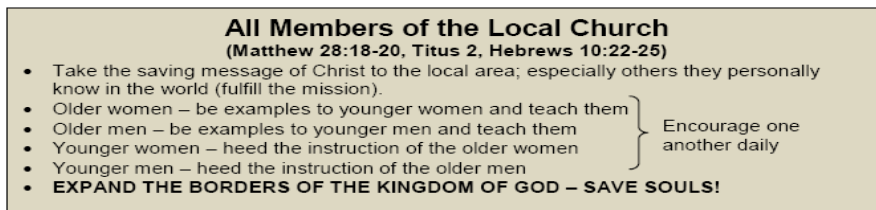
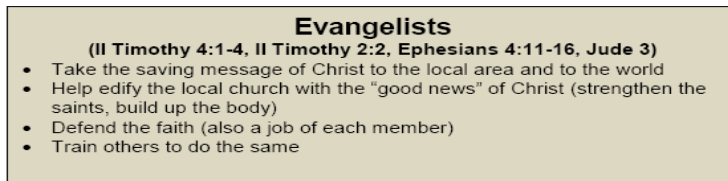
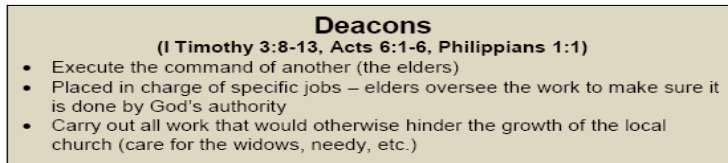
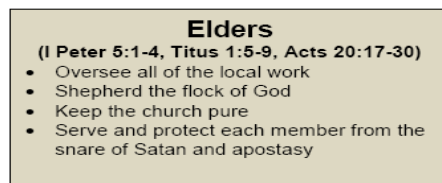
The “one body” shows unity in *organization*. The “one Spirit” shows unity in *guidance*. The “one hope” shows unity of *aim* or *reward*. The “one Lord” shows unity in *authority*. The “one faith” shows unity in *message*. The “one baptism” shows unity of *practice*. The “one God” shows unity in *worship*. God's plan is UNITY.

**WE BECOME JUST CHRISTIANS WHEN WE RESTORE THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH**  
**#1 - RESTORED CHURCHES HAVE FIRST CENTURY STRUCTURE & ORGANIZATION**

**The Organizational Structure of the Church**



**THE LOCAL CHURCH**



**WE BECOME JUST CHRISTIANS WHEN WE RESTORE THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH**  
**#2 - RESTORED CHURCHES HAVE THE FIRST CENTURY PATTERNS OF WORSHIP**

<b>General Command</b>	<b>Necessarily Authorizes</b>
Hebrews 10: 25 ASSEMBLE	Building Facility
1 <sup>st</sup> Cor. 16: 1 & 2 GIVE	Church Treasury
Acts 2: 38 BAPTIZE	Church Baptistry
Ephesians 5: 19 SING	Song Leader
Acts 20: 7 COMMUNION	Plates & Cups
Matthew 28: 18 TEACH	Teaching Aides

**WE BECOME JUST CHRISTIANS WHEN WE RESTORE THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH**  
**#3 - RESTORED CHURCHES PREACH THE FIRST CENTURY PLAN OF SALVATION**

**JUDGEMENT PREPARED**  
**FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS**

**Five Steps For Saving:**

- **HEARING:**
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- **BELIEVING:**
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- **REPENTING:**
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- **CONFESSING:**
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- **BAPTISM:**
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 - 38

**PART II:  
THE CHURCH**

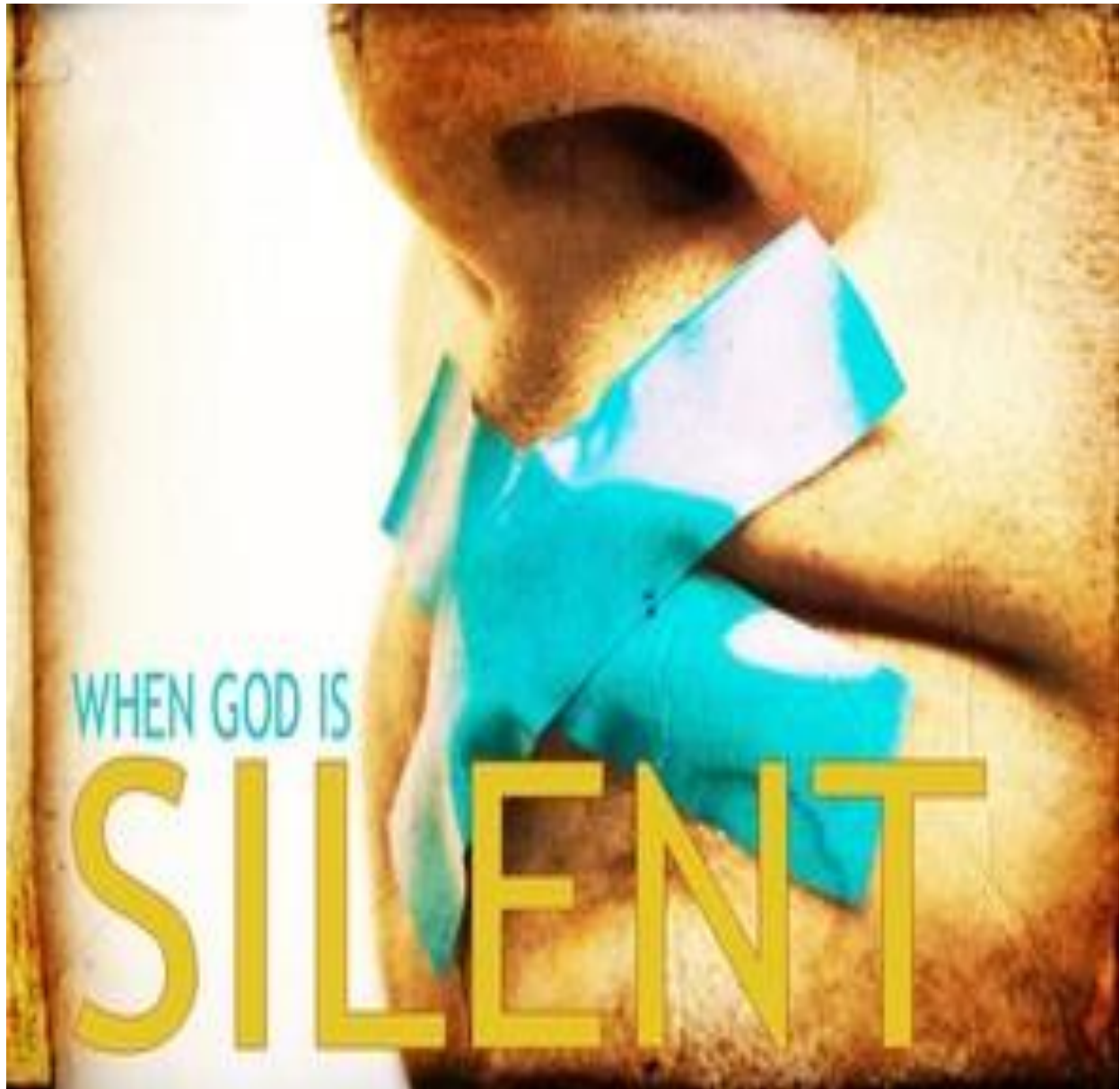
**JOHN HAFFNER**

*Video*  **BIBLE STUDY**

The image is a promotional graphic for a video Bible study. It features a man with a beard and red hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt, standing in front of a background of an open Bible. The text is arranged as follows: 'PART II: THE CHURCH' in large white serif font on the left; 'JOHN HAFFNER' in white sans-serif font on a black bar below the man; and 'Video BIBLE STUDY' at the bottom, with 'Video' in a white script font, a red play button icon, and 'BIBLE STUDY' in a white sans-serif font on a black bar.



**THE NOVELTY & INNOVATIONS CURE**  
**WHEN GOD'S SILENT WE'RE SILENT!**



**SCRIPTURAL SILENCE INTERPRETED**  
**PROSCRIPTIVE NOT PRESCRIPTIVE!**

# **FIRST CENTURY RESTORATION APPLIES THE ORIGINAL DEFINITION OF THE “ESSENTIALS”**

## *A Restoration Plea:*



\* Restorer Plea Same As Reformer Meiderlin on "Essentials"

**Mere Evangelism/Mere Discipleship/Mere Apology/Mere Theology/Mere Spirituality**

## **Local Church Group Outlines The Essentials:**

**WE TAKE THE BIBLE AS OUR ONLY RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE. (2 TIMOTHY 3:16)**

**WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED, INERRANT, AUTHORITATIVE, RELEVANT TO ALL TIMES AND ABSOLUTELY TRUE.**

**IN HONOR OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, WE WEAR THE BIBLE-GIVEN NAME FOR HIS FOLLOWERS: "CHRISTIANS". (ACTS 11:26)**

**TO REMEMBER JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS FOR US, WE OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER EACH WEEK ON THE LORD'S DAY AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS. (ACTS 20:7, 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-32, ACTS 2:42)**

**WE UPHOLD THE SEVEN ESSENTIALS FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY AMONG THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST: "ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, ONE HOPE, ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM, ONE GOD." (EPHESIANS 4:4-6)**

**WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST, THE VIRGIN BORN SON OF GOD IS THE ONLY WAY FOR MAN TO BE SAVED FROM HIS SINS AND HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (ACTS 4:12, JOHN 14:6)**

**WE BELIEVE THAT SINNERS ARE SAVED BY GRACE, THRU FAITH, COMPLETED AT THE FAITH ACT OF BAPTISM. (EPHESIANS 2:8, COLOSSIANS 2:12, ACTS 22:16, 1 PETER 3:21)**

**WE BELIEVE THAT BAPTISM "IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS" IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF A PENITENT SINNER'S PERSONAL OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, AND IS TO BE PRACTICED BY IMMERSION ONLY. (ROMANS 6:1-5, ACTS 2:38)**

**WE BELIEVE THE BENEFITS OF OBEYING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST ARE GOD'S GIFTS OF: FORGIVENESS OF SINS (ACTS 2:38, COLOSSIANS 2:12-13) ETERNAL LIFE (ROMANS 6:23) SALVATION (MARK 16:16) PEACE WITH GOD (ROMANS 5:1-2) ADDED TO THE CHURCH BY THE LORD (ACTS 2:47) THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLING WITHIN OUR HEARTS (ACTS 2:38, ROMANS 8:9-11)**

**WE BELIEVE THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE INDEPENDENT CONGREGATIONS, NEEDING NO EXTRA-CONGREGATIONAL STRUCTURE OR DENOMINATION. EACH CONGREGATION IS ORGANIZED WITH ELDERS, EVANGELISTS AND DEACONS TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION FOR THE MINISTRY OF EACH CONGREGATION. (EPHESIANS 4:1-12, PHILIPPIANS 1:2)**

**WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LEAD OTHERS TO FAITH IN JESUS, TO BE READY FOR HIS RETURN AND THE JUDGMENT TO FOLLOW. (2 CORINTHIANS 5:10, ROMANS 1:16, HEBREWS**

**RUSHVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

## **BIBLETALK PROGRAM EXPOSITS ESSENTIALS:**

Now there is an essential for you. The apostles and the early disciples were persecuted because against the trend of inclusivity (the idea that everybody is included) they preached that salvation was exclusively in Christ and no other. And that idea was not popular. They were killed for it. That idea was not popular in the first century and is not popular today. It has never been a popular idea.

Our problem is that once again, the move is towards inclusivity in the 21st century, that's the religious philosophical thought, inclusivity. Let's gather everybody in together. That's the movement and anyone who stands up and says, "no there are some essentials." There are some basics that can't be compromised. These people are labeled as narrow-minded or bigoted or legalistic. If you stand up and say, "no, no there's a line here, there's a line you can't cross." You are labeled as being narrow-minded. Our other problem is that there are some among us who make the list of essentials so long that hardly anybody can become a Christian.

So those are the opposites. Some people do not want any lists, no essentials, everybody's okay. And then you have the people at the other end who make the list of essentials so long that nobody can become a Christian. Nobody even wants to become a Christian because the list is so long - so impossible - so demanding.

The answer of course, is as always, just to review what the essentials are, according to the Bible, not according to human opinion, and then to stand firm in these, with a loving attitude you're doing this.

People may not like the idea of essentials and exclusivity, but they will at least be sure of what we in the Church of Christ stand for and they will hopefully learn what the Bible teaches.

## **WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?**

Now, the question in its simplest form is this: what must I do to be saved? Now the question is expressed in a lot of different ways, but the bottom line is what are the things that must happen, or that I must do, in order to guarantee that when I die, I'm going to go to heaven.

Now, I don't think that this question is born out of laziness or selfishness. It isn't. What is the minimum that I must do? Like when I was teaching school you would say "the assignment is to read your history book" and there is always one in the class that'll raise their hand and asks, "what's the minimum number of pages that we have to read for this report."

This question about the essentials is not about the minimum I must do to be saved. It's what the essentials are. The important, the must things. And there are must things in Christianity.

People who are concerned with their souls do not want to risk losing salvation because of ignorance or neglect. They want to know what the essentials are. These essentials have been packaged in several different ways but basically, they're the following.

## **ESSENTIAL #1: FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE DIVINE SON OF GOD**

The first essential is faith in Jesus Christ not just faith in somebody like Christ, it's faith in Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God. It was the faith required of Thomas when he confessed before the resurrected Jesus and said, "my Lord and my God." He confessed a divine Jesus, not just my Lord, my teacher, my superior. He confessed that Jesus was God, Divine.

That the kind of faith in Jesus that's essential to salvation. It was a risen Christ and this particular Lord that Peter preached in Acts Chapter Two. Peter preached about Jesus, the same divine son of God that the prophets spoke of in the Old Testament. That God would raise from the dead as a sign. That's the Jesus that Peter preached about in Acts 2.

It was Jesus, the divine Lord become man and resurrected from the dead that Paul proclaimed in Philippians 2:6-11, when he said, "who although He existed in the form of God, didn't regard equality with God as a thing to be grasped." What was he talking about? He was talking about Jesus & what did he say about Jesus? He said, this person was equal with God. He preached a divine Jesus.

All religions require faith in some form or another, but Christianity demands that the individual accept as true that Jesus Christ is God, the only divine Son of God. Not only is Jesus the only son of God but that the only way to be saved is through Him (Acts 14).

Christianity demands that we believe that Jesus is the only son of God and that the only way to enter heaven is through faith in Him. Anything less than this, like Jesus is an angel (as believed the Jehovah witnesses) or that Jesus is a prophet (as believed by the Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists) or that Jesus is a good teacher (as believed by many atheists). Anything less than faith in Jesus as divine is not faith in Jesus. Anything less is not faith in Jesus Christ that Jesus is God, the only savior and that He is the only one who can save. **This is essential.** If you don't have this, you're missing a basic element of salvation.

## **ESSENTIAL #2: REPENTANCE & BAPTISM**

I put them together: repentance and baptism. First, let me explain to you what these things are and then I'll explain why I've put these two together.

## REPENTANCE

First of all, repentance is a kind of religious word. It means simply to turn or to turn around in the conversion experience. It's a turning away from the world and from sin and a turning towards God.

In a practical sense, it means to abandon sinful practices and to begin pursuing a holy lifestyle. That's as practical as you can get before you were a sinner, you loved sinning and you kind of got involved in it. You didn't care what people thought about it. Repentance means you now turn away from that. You try to avoid sin. You walk towards God, you walk in the light, so to speak.

That does not mean being without sin or being perfect and never making a mistake. It means a redirection of your life, a conscious decision to redirect your life towards God and the things that God wants you to do. That's repentance.

## BAPTISM

Baptism is a procedure where one is immersed or buried in the water. Now the Greek command word and the imagery we find in the Bible, as well as the early history of the church, all point to baptism by immersion as the method practice in the Bible.

Now I say this because there are a lot of forms of baptisms practiced today, but that are not according to what the Bible teaches on the subject. The best way I could frame this question is: if you were being baptized by the Apostle Peter or Paul, how would they baptize you? Well, the Bible says they would baptize you by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ. That's how they do it. So that's why we do it that way today.

Now, the reason I put repentance and baptism together as one is because they are always the biblical response or the expression of faith necessary for salvation. When a person believes that Jesus is the divine Son of God, there is both a requirement by God that the believer expressed that faith. And there is a need by the believer to express his or her.



I believe the expression of faith is seen in a person's repentance, which is the practical redirection of an individual's life because of sin and baptism, which is the moment in time when one submits his life to God, for the removal of sin and the renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Some people say that all we need to do is believe in order to be saved but that notion is contrary to what the Bible teaches. From the very beginning to the very end. Faith has always required a concrete expression.

- Abraham believed but he expressed his belief by obeying God and agreeing to sacrifices.
- Moses believed and expressed that faith by going to the Pharaoh and leading his people out of Egypt.
- Solomon believed and expressed that belief by building the temple according to what his father had instructed him to do inspired by God.
- The apostles believed and they expressed their beliefs by gathering in the upper room and waiting for the Holy Spirit.

Each of these and hundreds of others in the Bible, God gave what they were to do in order to express their faith. Now, when Peter preached Christ as the divine Lord at Pentecost, the people who believed and who accepted as true that statement, asked him what shall we do. They heard what he said. They heard the message. They believed the message and the very next thing they said was what shall we do?

In other words, we hear you. We believe what you say, what do we do to express our faith? Peter could have said, "I want you to fast for three days and pray that God forgives you." Those who believed him would have fasted for three days and God would have forgiven them. And God would have given them the Holy Spirit. He could've said, "let each one of you accept Jesus as your personal savior." And all those who accepted Jesus as their personal savior would have raised their hand. And at that very moment, they would have been forgiven and received the Holy spirit. Peter could have said any one of those things, but what did he say?

Through the power of the Holy spirit? Peter said, "Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy spirit." That's what Peter said, what God required and quite clearly explained was that repentance and baptism were the proper biblical, godly, effective response of faith in Christ Jesus and note that it wasn't complicated. People understood that kind of response because in [Acts 2:41](#), it says that three thousand people responded in faith. They came forward and they were baptized in order to have their sins forgiven and receive. **The Holy Spirit now explained the essentials of becoming a Christian.**

The move towards unity is commendable. It's even biblical. Jesus commanded that we be one but there are certain things that cannot be compromised. And these, I refer to as essential.

The Bible teaches us that there are some things that are essential for salvation and without these things a person cannot call himself or herself a Christian, cannot be saved. These are not things that I've invented for the purpose of this sermon. These are the things that are in the Bible.

The first three essentials were:

1. **Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.** If you don't have that, you're not a Christian. The Bible teaches in order to be a Christian or to be saved you need to believe that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God and nothing less than that will do.
2. **Repent from sin.** Repentance is an essential. You cannot be a child of God unless you have made a conscious decision that you're going to do away with sin in your life.
3. **Baptism in Jesus's name.** Every instance that we see salvation occurring in the New Testament when they describe it, they're always talking about someone being baptized.

The Bible teaches that without these essential elements a person cannot be saved or considered a Christian. As a matter of fact, without these essentials, Christianity is no longer Christianity. It might be a religion of some sort because there are a lot of religious buildings with signs in the front, even church buildings with crosses on them - that do not require faith in Jesus, that do not require any kind of conscious repentance and that certainly do not require baptism in any state or form, and yet call themselves churches. But the Bible says without these essentials that I have described, you do not have Christianity.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

The central of salvation and the Christian religion is the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, Peter joins the idea of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit as two sides to the same salvation idea.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 2:38

The idea is that in the past sin and death were the center of a person's existence but now through faith expressed in repentance and baptism, a new life emerges where sin is forgiven and the Holy Spirit becomes the central figure in a Christian's life. We do not say that often do we? The Holy Spirit becomes the central figure in our Christian life and yet that's what happens. That was the promise of the prophets. The promise of the prophets was not simply that men would be forgiven their sins. The promise of the prophets throughout the ages was that the time would come when all people would have the Holy Spirit, not just the prophets, not just the Kings, not just the judges, but that everyone would possess the Holy Spirit himself.

So Peter declares the glorious news that Jesus has died and resurrected in order to affect not only the forgiveness of sin but that the forgiveness of sins only prepares us as vessels to receive the true gift of God, which is the Holy Spirit. The forgiveness is a means.

Forgiveness is the means that God uses to give us what he ultimately wanted to give us and that is the Holy Spirit. Don't stop short. The Holy Spirit is the end game. It's the final purpose of God that each one of us possess the Holy Spirit.

I'm not saying that we have to agree on the issue of how the Holy Spirit interacts with us as human beings. **Whether he dwells within the Christian or whether he expresses himself in a Christian's life through the influence of the word. This is not essential.** This isn't the essential issue concerning the Holy Spirit. **The essential issue concerning the Holy Spirit is whether or not as Paul says in Romans 8:14, "we are being led by the spirit." It's not about how does the spirit interacts with us? It's about are we being led by the Holy Spirit? That's what it's about.**

We usually say that the final essential of salvation is faithfulness. Jesus tells His disciples that they must remain faithful until the end in order to be saved, but remaining faithful it's not something that stands all by itself or that a human being can accomplish by himself. Remaining faithful until the end is something that happens as a result of following after the Holy Spirit, as a result of yielding to the Holy Spirit, as a result of submitting to the direction of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. That's how you remain faithful to the end.

Being led by the Holy Spirit is not some mysterious thing. It's not some subjective idea beyond observation. Among other things you can say and you can know, and you can understand that you're being led by the spirit.

When you read the Bible and do what it says, you read the Bible and do what it says. You're being led by the Holy Spirit. The people who heard the apostles preaching on Pentecost and they responded to the apostles by repenting of their sins and by being baptized, they were following the lead of the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit was saying repent and be baptized - those who did that were following the lead of the Holy Spirit.

When we follow our conscience in the light of God's word, we are being led by the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit will encourage us in good and will discourage us from evil.

You're following the Holy Spirit when something is before you, either good or evil, and you choose despite everything your flesh says to follow what is right and good. You're following after the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us if by the spirit we are putting to death, the deeds of the flesh, when you say no to temptation when you say no to the flesh, you are following after the Holy Spirit, there's nothing mysterious about it.

People who follow after the Holy spirit discover and develop spiritual abilities in the service of Christ (Romans 12). People who follow after the Spirit are resurrected from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. Why do you think God needed to forgive us? He needed to forgive us so that we would be a pure vessel into which he could place the Holy Spirit. And why do you think he needed to place the Holy Spirit within us? So that at the right time he could, through the power of the Holy Spirit, resurrect us from the dead. That's still the point from the beginning of time. God has planned our resurrection from the dead.

## **REPENTANCE AND BAPTISM ARE THE GOD-ORDAINED WAYS OF EXPRESSING OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.**

**I believe in Christ and how does God tell me to express that? By repenting of my sins and by being immersed in water in the name of Jesus, not just repentance, not just baptism, but both a sincere change and a burial in water are what God has clearly set forth as our response to his offer of forgiveness.**

**Maybe we can figure out who's been properly baptized or not, but I'll tell you something. God can figure out not only who's been properly baptized or not but who has properly repented or not.**

God knows who has sincerely repented and repentance is as much a requirement as baptism. Even if it's a little more difficult to discern, God can discern it and He will. A spirit-filled life is a witness of our continued faith and a testimony of the risen Jesus to the world.

Now, these are not the only things in the Bible. These are not the only things in Christianity, but these are the essentials. If you have these, you have Christians. And if these are missing, it does not matter what you have got. You're missing the important things.

## COMMON QUESTIONS

People ask me why do you choose these as the essentials, who made you the judge, who made you the big chief, who made you the big theologian, that you can list what are the essentials?

What I looked for in the essentials were the things that the Bible itself associated with salvation. I didn't look in Church of Christ manuals or a catechism. We don't ascribe to those types of things. I simply looked at the Bible and asked myself, what does the Bible associate with salvation?

Salvation is the essential idea. Salvation is the bottom line. Whether we go to heaven or to hell that's, what's really important. Everything else is secondary. When you're on your death bed you're not worried about women deacons or instrumental music. The only thing you want to know is "am I going to heaven?"

The things that I have mentioned, our faith in Jesus as God, repentance and baptism, our spirit-filled living. These were the only things that the Bible specifically said that you must have in order to be saved. When we have to speak, we must remember the old adage of the restoration movement. We need to speak where the Bible speaks and where the Bible is silent we need to remain silent.

## LEGALISM AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Another question or criticism is that the Church of Christ is a bunch of narrow-minded legalists. You're Pharisees. Now some say this because we actually make a distinction between those who are saved and those who are lost and they say we're not allowed to judge or that we are judgmental or legalistic. Sometimes people say, "you think you're the only ones going to heaven, right?"

Now there's a major misunderstanding here. When people say that they don't know what legalism is. Legalism is a belief that you can actually be saved by perfect obedience. That you are actually accomplishing perfect obedience. The Pharisees in the Bible and the Old Testament believed this. They believed that you could be saved by obeying the Law. And they believed that they were obeying the law. They didn't need Jesus. What do we need a sacrifice for our sins? We were obeying the law. We're okay.

People also say this because we include baptism as an essential and they claim that this a work. I think we understand that we cannot be saved by perfect obedience. That's why Jesus died for our sins. But you do have to exercise some obedience in order to be saved? I hate to throw a wet towel on your party here, but you have to exercise some obedience in order to be saved. The Bible says that you have to believe, right? And you have to obey that command and exercise your will in order to believe. Who would argue that you don't have to believe in order to be saved nobody? When you believe, your mind takes in information and decides whether it's true or not, and then accepts it, that's an act of the will.

The Bible says that you have to repent. Again, no one would argue that Christians shouldn't repent from their sins. Everybody agrees on that. And yet you have to obey a command. Don't you? The Bible says, repent. You have to obey. You have to change things.

Things have to change. There's something you have to obey. We simply say that God also says that we must be baptized and so we obey that command in order to be saved.

We're not legalistic. We simply want to be obedient to God and respond to God in a way that God desires. That's not legalism. That's love.

I heard Jesus last had said, "if you love me, you will keep my commands." Jesus is the one who associated love with obedience. There's relationship between love and obedience. And what we say is, God just tell us what you want us to do and we will do it. That's not legalism. That's love. That is respect. That is piety. That is a desire to do God's will and be pleasing. Throughout all of history God has loved those who desired to obey Him.

Notice it's not those who obeyed Him perfectly because no one ever did. God loved the ones who desire to do His will and I like to think that we are that kind of people. We want to know what God wants from us and we want to do it.

## **WHAT ABOUT ALL THE NICE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE THE ESSENTIALS?**

Now the mistake here is a form of legalism but in reverse. This is the assumption that we can exchange a measure of human niceness or zeal for salvation. This person is nice therefore that person can trade being nice for being saved.

The Bible tells us that God sees into the hearts of every single person. And God determines that all people without exception are sinners and all people need His grace (Romans 3:23). What we do is deny this fact and we say that this or that person is nice enough or zealous enough to stand before God without Christ. And without obeying Christ we decide what the gospel is going to be. The gospel of nice. But the Bible says that each individual needs Christ and each individual comes to Christ in exactly the same way and that is by obeying Him. Everybody comes to God the same way.

The whole point of the gospel is that it doesn't matter how nice you are or how many good deeds you do or how zealous you are in your religion, without the essentials there is no salvation. That's why we evangelize.

- Bible Talk Program Transcript



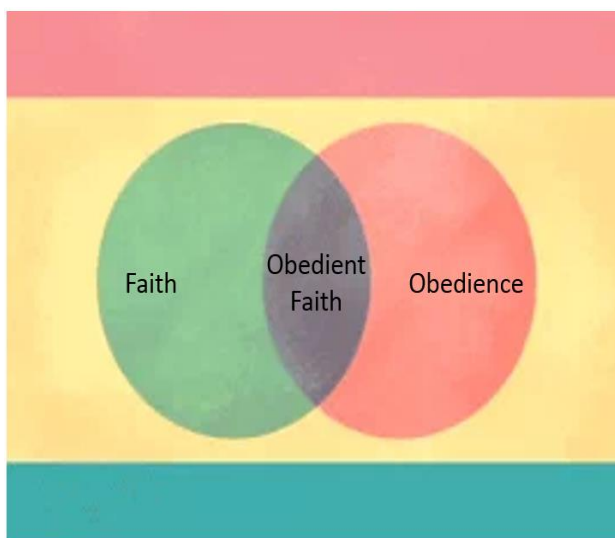
## **“What’s Wrong With Denominational Baptism”**

**“In Conclusion, a person cannot be taught wrong and baptized right; a person cannot be baptized wrong and worship right; he cannot worship wrong and live right; he cannot live wrong and die right. Therefore, unless one’s baptism is right, he has no hope for salvation in Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (Jn. 14:6). Any person whose baptism is not Bible baptism is seeking to approach God in some other way. Jesus said no person could do that. A baptism that involves the wrong action, wrong subject, or wrong design is worthless. Any person having been baptized after this fashion, like the twelve men of Acts 19, needs to reconsider his former baptism and be baptized as the Bible directs. As penitent believer in Christ, he needs to be immersed in water for the remission of his sins in order to become part of the redeemed of all the ages.” – Mike Willis**

## AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

# Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



*O That Will Be Glory*

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

*I an* Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

*When by His grace I shall look on His face, e*

*That will be glory, be glory for me. me.*

*The Spiritual Sword Vol. 17 #4*  
*Special Issue@Amazing Grace*

## Grace Demands Faith Obedience

**Conclusion.** “What a wonderful, loving Father we have! By his grace he has provided the *perfect plan* wherein lowly sinful man can escape the snares of Satan. By his grace he has provided the *perfect person* to be our sacrifice for sin, our sin-bearer. By his grace he has provided the *perfect propitiation* for our sins for which we could not other-wise receive pardon. This is the wonderful grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men. But only those who appropriate that marvelous gift through **obedient faith** will be able to enjoy the eternal verities of God’s grace!” – Eddie Whitten

