



"The Beginnings of Faith"

(#6)

- 1—Biblical Oneness—What is it?
- 2—Biblical Oneness must be desired
- 3—Biblical Oneness is based on Common Beliefs
- 4—Undermining Biblical Oneness
- 5—Biblical Unity and Fellowship
- 6—Biblical Unity and Teaching

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"Biblical Unity—What is it?"

A study on Biblical Unity must deal with the question: *"Who is a Christian?"* The reason should be obvious—we are talking about "Christians" being unified—not the world! It is talking about those who would come to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God—that they would be one (Jn. 17:22). Whatever Jesus commands of people to become a Christian, they must do! When we do, we become a part of the "one body of Christ" (Eph. 4:4). It is these people that are being called upon to be unified. And, if these terms of pardon are tampered with, there can be no real "Biblical unity!"

God Wants Us to be Unified!

Jesus fervently prayed for such!

Jn. 17:20-23 _____

God commands such!

Eph. 4:3 _____

Unity is what God wants; and therefore, it is what every child of God should also want!

Question: *"If you were placing membership with a congregation and had a choice of two congregations; and you came to know that one was not unified, which would you choose and why?"* _____

The unity of a congregation is a continual challenge just as it was in the beginning of the church's existence.

Quote: *"There is a strange and strong attachment that draws people together. If it were not for perverse powers there would be no need to strive for unity; it would come automatically."*

Gen. 11:6—*"Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them."*

Synonyms for Unity: Agreement, harmony, accord, concord, unison, union, unanimity, oneness, same purpose, etc.

General Definition:

1. *"An energetic group of people committed to achieving common objectives."*
2. *"People who work well together and enjoy working with each other."*
3. *"People who produce high quality results because they know how to and desire to function well with one another."*

Biblical Unity

1 Cor. 1:10 _____

Jn. 17:22-23 _____

Ps. 133:1 _____

Eph. 4:3 _____

Eph. 4:13 _____

Eph. 4:16 _____

Phil. 1:27 _____

Phil. 2:1-4: _____

Requisites for Unity _____

Concepts of Unity _____

Col. 3:14-17 _____

Acts 4:32 _____

Rom. 12:16 _____

Rom. 12:18 _____

It is important that we have a correct understanding of "unity" among Christians. A wrong view can help to tear up or destroy the "oneness" of a loving group of people.

Challenging Questions

1. In a congregation full of people from different backgrounds, beliefs, and opinions; and that differ in their maturity in Christ, how can they all believe alike?

2. Christians are brought into a relationship with one another under the headship of Christ for the purposes of working together to carry out God's Will in their lives and to help nurture one another so we can be faithful to the end. In what sense can it be said they are unified or one?

3. How can such a congregation be of the same mind?

4. About what are they to be of the same mind?

5. To what extent are they to be of the same mind?

6. How can an immature Christian, who speaks before the congregation, be able to speak the same thing that a mature Christian speaks?

7. How can people who came out of Judaism or paganism be made "one" people in Christ? (Eph. 2:11-22).

8. Is Biblical Unity among God's people similar to the unity between a husband and wife?

9. Which would be the greater challenge to unity in your mind:

_____ Doctrinal Beliefs?

_____ Physical, sociological, monetary, slave versus free, Jew versus Gentile, etc., differences?

Concluding Thoughts

1. Just how serious are we about Unity?
2. How willing are we to give up our personal liberty in Christ in order to maintain that Unity?
3. The world MUST see us work through our differences while maintaining our "oneness."
4. We MUST strive diligently to answer the prayer of Jesus.
5. Truth must not be compromised, but it may be something we have to grow in (in a loving atmosphere).

Lesson Two

"Biblical Oneness must be Desired!"

Unity in a congregation can often be "sensed," "smelled," or "picked up on!" People love to come into an atmosphere of unity and harmony. Even the humblest of homes can have love, care, concern, unity, and harmony that money cannot buy. Families working and playing together is very uplifting. Orchestras playing in unison make music so desirable. A church living in harmony with one another, working together in peace and love is most desirable. Such makes the rough roads of life smoother and easier to travel. ***"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity."*** (Ps. 133:1). Such is an answer to Jesus' prayer in Jn. 17. Jesus said that the peacemaker is blessed (Matt. 5:9).

However, if a home or church has hostility or negative feelings, it cannot hide their problems for long. A church that is bickering is doomed to division and decay. Division, strife, contention are works of the flesh and are condemned by God (Gal. 5:19). A church is most fortunate and blessed never to have had a split or division. But it is cursed for years trying to overcome the evil of division. Churches need desperately to live in harmony with each other and to do all they can to preserve unity in their midst.

Challenging Questions

- 1. If unity is so desirable, then why don't we do all within our power to bring about and keep unified?**
- 2. Why don't preachers preach the same things?**
- 3. Why don't congregations hold to the same truths given by God?**

Basic Reasons for Dis-unity!

Eph. 4:3; Jn. 17:22 _____

Simply put, dis-unity is caused by a lack of concern or indifference! Unity does not just happen, it requires effort! We need to earnestly pray for such. We need to diligently work at the effort. We need to thank God for what unity and harmony we have. Unity must never be neglected. Unity is like freedom—it is most appreciated when it is lost!

Biblical unity cannot be forced! God can command it, but we must respect His authority and be obedient! Elders can plead with the church to be unified, but they have no means of enforcing such. Preachers can preach on it, but the church must "see to it!" (Rom. 14:19). Deity wants us to be unified! And.....we are the benefactors of such! If we grow dilatory, we will be the losers!

1 Cor. 1:10; 3:1-4; 4:6; Rom. 6:1-2, 6; Rom. 8:6; Jas. 1:26 _____

The church at Corinth had all the gifts; and as well, preachers and prophets to teach them the Truth of God. But in spite of that, division had raised its ugly head among them. Their trouble came because of carnality (human weaknesses). They were exalting and following men. The "old man" had not been sufficiently crucified. They were not allowing the Spirit of God to fully guide them. Discipline was being called for in their midst. Human weaknesses must be dealt with!

1 Pet. 5:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Pet. 5:9 _____

It is easy to allow Satan to get a foot in the door. He is seeking to build barriers to unity. He smiles when people follow their "party leaders," rather than Christ. When we allow discord, division, and dissension in our midst, we are letting Satan have his way with us. We are warned to be sober and vigilant and to realize who the real enemy is!

Unity in the midst of differences

The "ideal" unity is where everyone is of the same mind, the same judgment, and all speak the same thing. But when you have new converts in a congregation of mature people, there is no way that you will have the "ideal!" The question is....do we allow these differences to divide us or do we strive to remain "united in spirit" in the midst of such?

Rom. 14:19

During the "Restoration Movement" a slogan was suggested that would help to keep congregations in unity and harmony.....

*"In matters of faith, unity: in matters of opinion, Liberty;
and in all things, love."*

God's people must stay together and work through their differences as we strive towards the ideal of unity.

New Christians (and sometimes older Christians) have much to learn to become strong and stable. They can't believe everything exactly the same as a mature Christian would. Also, the church is made up of lukewarm, carnally-minded, fearful, weak, doubtful, and even those who are caught up in some sin or sins. Such may not destroy the spirit of unity, but they can be a threat to such. Being imperfect does not say we are not a Christian and right with God. Unity seems to be the same. We will never see the "ideal" unity; but, God commands it, and we are always striving for it. We may not have everything perfect, but we are still unified in our efforts to serve God and our fellowman.

Concluding Thoughts

Many, if not all, churches have people in them that are bickering, petty, fussing, negative, hard-headed, fault-finding, express unjust criticism, etc. These can do great harm to the unity of the church. They may be a minority, but such often get their way to the detriment of the church.

How strong is your desire for unity? How much of an effort are you willing to make to keep it? It would be wonderful if every member had this attitude:

*"We are God's people, engaged in a great work, and we have a
mind to work with God to accomplish great things to His
glory."*

Challenging Questions

1. How do you deal with people who constantly cause disharmony in the church?

Rom. 16:17-18 _____

2 Thess. 3:6, 14 _____

2 John 9-11 _____

2. What can be expected of new Christians in regards to keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?

Eph. 4:3 _____

1 Pet. 2:1-2 _____

Rom. 14:19 _____

3. What can be expected of a mature Christian in regards to keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?

Rom. 14:1 _____

Rom. 14:21 _____

Rom. 14:23 _____

Rom. 15:1-2 _____

Lesson Three

***"Biblical Oneness is based on
Common Beliefs"***

Paul's admonition to the Church at Corinth was *"that you all speak the same thing!"* (1 Cor. 1:10). The Spirit of God was revealing God's message to inspired men who were teaching the Church. But there were some who evidently were not speaking the same thing as the inspired men. God does not give us liberty to just believe and teach whatever we want to (Acts 2:42). The early church knew that they were to believe and teach that which the inspired Apostles taught. They were also given strong warnings about the necessity of abiding in this teaching as well (2 John 9). Such is necessary if we want fellowship with the Father and the Son. To teach something different from the doctrine (teaching) of Christ or the doctrine (teaching) of the Apostles—such was called "evil deeds." (2 John 11). Some men in the early churches struggled with this because of pride and arrogance (3 John 9). This was a strong reason for the admonition in Eph. 4:3—*"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* They had to maintain a spirit of unity while they worked through their differences.

Our worship assemblies can illustrate the problem we face. A person introduces something into the worship that is not authorized by the Word of God. The group is faced with the challenge of worshiping together because of the change. Or, a teacher or preacher begins to teach contrary to Scriptures. If this is not corrected, it can lead to disunity (division, strife). God's admonition to us is that we all speak the same things—not different things that brings about division and disunity.

The Seven "ones" that maintain unity

After the Apostle had given the admonition to keep or maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, he then listed seven things that are the foundation beliefs of "Christianity!" (Eph. 4:3, 4-6). We will look at each one briefly in order to see why they are basic.

ONE GOD. This expression infers that all other so-called gods are not really God. At the time the church began, this belief was not as much of a problem for the Jews as it was for the Gentiles with their many idols. But when you delve deeper into this expression, the Jews did have a problem with accepting the Deity of Christ. A deeper and more mature understanding requires time and study. It is important that all hold to the "one God" that has given us His Revelation to be believed and followed.

ONE LORD. The early church confessed "*Jesus as Lord.*" (Rom. 10:9-10). All of us are to speak the same thing.....Jesus is Lord! Peter preached "*Jesus as Lord.*" (Acts 2:36). He unifies us because we all listen to Him. Those who bring strife, division, and disunity are those who will not recognize His Lordship (Luke 6:46). The Apostle Paul stated: "*Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*" (Col. 1:28).

ONE SPIRIT. It is by this Spirit that the Gospel was preached to the world (Col. 1:23). It is by this same Spirit that we are born again into the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3-8). It is this same Spirit that takes up His abode in us when we obey Him (Acts 5:32). There are many spirit-beings, but only **one** Holy Spirit that we believe in and are guided by. This One Spirit is the third (person) of the Godhead—thus, He is Deity! A correct and deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's Nature and Work requires time and study.

ONE FAITH. True religion begins when a person puts his trust in the One True God of Heaven and is obedient to Him. The meaning of religion is: "*to bind back again.*" We need to be back into fellowship with God and it is accomplished by holding to the "one faith!" Faith in God is a necessity on man's part to be right with God. But there is also a "System of Faith" that God has given once for all (Jude 3). People must become obedient to the "one faith!" (Acts 6:7). Churches need to be "*established in the faith* (the one faith)." (Acts 16:5). We are told by Jude that we are to "*earnestly contend for the faith*" (Jude 3). The Apostle Paul stated that he "*preached the faith*" that he once tried to destroy. (Gal. 1:23). It is critical that all Christians hold to and speak only the "one faith" revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles and Prophets. (Eph. 3:5). We can spend a lifetime learning and understanding the "one faith."

ONE BAPTISM. To be immersed in water (buried) is a simple and humble act that God has required of human beings in order to have the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4). It is not three immersions, but one "immersion." It is one act to be done in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20). It is not an act of sprinkling water over a person, nor is it an act of pouring water over a person. It is the one act that God requires for us to come into the Church that Jesus built (Acts 2:47). A deeper study will help one to more fully appreciate why God has required such an act.

ONE BODY. When one believes in God and in Christ as the Son of God; and is willing to turn from his disobedience to obedience to God; and is willing to openly confess Jesus as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9-10); he is then immersed in water so that he will be added to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13

—which is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). To be added to the church is to enjoy the special fellowship and worship activities with other Christians, as well as with God (1 Jn. 1:7). There may be many religious bodies in the world, but there is only "one body" that belongs to Christ!

ONE HOPE. Upon being saved, added to the Church, we begin our walk of righteousness (1 Jn. 1:7). We are challenged to become like God, like Christ, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we will live godly and righteously in this present evil world. If we will do this, we have a promise of a reward someday in Heaven with God. We will be raised up to receive everlasting life (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 2:10). What is awaiting the faithful Christian is described in various ways to help us understand the desirability of such a hope. But, it takes time and study to learn what God has revealed about this "one hope."

Concluding Thoughts

God has not only commanded us to be unified, but has given us the seven foundational beliefs that help to keep us together as "one body" of true believers. These seven ones are intended to be a blessing for Christians, but also to help convince the world of Jesus' Deity. We have a great challenge ahead of us....."*all speak the same things.*" It is certainly something that we can do and God believes that we can do it. Let's give ourselves to holding firm to these basic beliefs.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the Basis for all speaking the same thing?

2. How does our Worship assemblies illustrate the need for "speaking the same things?"

3. When are the seven "Ones" taught to a person?

4. What is involved with believing in One God?

5. What is involved with believing in One Lord?

6. What is involved with believing in One Spirit?

7. What is involved with believing in One Faith?

8. What is involved with believing in One Baptism?

9. What is involved with believing in One Body?

10. What is involved with believing in One Hope?

Lesson Four

"Undermining Biblical Oneness"

Unity is what God wants and requires of each congregation of His people. It should be obvious that unity is not an easy thing to maintain—it must be worked at by all (Eph. 4:3). There seems to be one or more persons in each congregation that strives to bring about a divisive spirit within the group. Inspiration told the early Church:

- a) False teachers from without would try to destroy the Church. (Acts 20:28-30).
- b) Leaders in the Church would strive to lead some astray. (Acts 20:28-30).
- c) False teachers would come in among you to make merchandise of you and encourage you to participate in immoral and ungodly things. (2 Pet. 2:1ff).
- d) False spirits would strive to deceive Christians into believing false things about Christ (1 Jn. 4:1).
- e) There would be some among you that would bind their opinions as law (1 Tim. 4:1-5).
- f) There would be an apostasy from the faith. (2 Thess. 2:1ff).

If the early Church was warned about such, what about us today, are there any dangers of such for us? If so, how can we avoid such among us? How can we know who they are? What should we do with such once they are uncovered?

How do you identify a divisive person?

There are three Greek words that are used to describe such a person. The following will strive to define the words and make application of them so that such can be recognized in our midst.

Eritheia—*"A desire to put oneself forward, a partisan and factious spirit."* This person has a disposition of mind that craves distinction and self-assertion that leads to the disruption of peace, harmony, and organic oneness of the group. The word is translated "factious" or "contentious" in Rom. 2:8; 2 Cor. 12:20; Jas. 3:13-16; Phil. 1:15-17). It is a self-seeking and self-willed disposition of mind. This person promotes personal aims rather than serving God and others. Such an outlook or attitude results into a faction. Such people will serve in "official" positions for their own selfish interest. They will promote a party spirit or a faction. **Eritheia** is not division in its finished state, but leads to and helps to produce organic division.

Hairesis—*"One's chosen opinion or tenet; an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Word of God."* The original meaning of this word was "a choice" or "a set of opinions." Later, the word came to have reference to the opinions themselves. But still later, it is applied to the "sect" that maintains the opinions. As long as this opinion remains a theory in the mind of its originator, it is harmless and is not a matter of concern. But when it is taught and pressed to the point of having to be practiced, it then becomes a "schism"—it is heresy put into practice! Whatever produces a "schism" or a "party" is a "heresy" and is condemned by God. As one writer put it—*"It is one so fond of his own darling notions, that he will ruin the peace of the church for them."*

2 Peter 2:1 _____

Gal. 5:20 _____

1 Cor. 11:19 _____

Schisma—*"A cleft, rent, and metaphorically a division, dissension."* It is a rent in the church (1 Cor. 12:24-25; 11:18-19). This "rent" is brought on by a "party spirit" within the church. A "faction" is formed when a teacher puts himself forth and sets forth his chosen opinion or pattern of thought which causes a rift within the church. The rift comes for two reasons at least:

- a) He is teaching something different from the Scriptures;
- b) He is being resisted by members of the church who refuse to accept his opinions (2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Cor. 15:58).

Not only does this person disrupt the unity of the Church, but he actually causes a rent or division among the members of the Church by his teaching of his opinions.

Dichostasia—*"To stand apart, division, dissension."* This is the final outcome of the other three words. The two parties go their separate ways (Gal. 5:20; Rom. 16:17). When men push themselves forward and/or push their opinions as law, and they want distinction among the people—they are courting disaster for themselves and the Church. They speak perverse things (Acts 20:30) to draw away disciples after themselves. The pushing of one's opinions rends the peace and harmony of the Church; and, if continued in, it will bring bitterness, hate, and rancor among the group. It will end up with two different groups not in fellowship with each other.

These four words give the source, the cause, the development, and the consummation of all division in the Church.

How is a Divisive Person Described?

The following passages describe the characteristics of a divisive person:

Jude 4—Ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

3 John 9-11—Men who love to have the pre-eminence and will not respect knowledgeable people in the church—and even wishes to do them harm.

2 John 9-11—Men who transgress and do not abide in the doctrine of Christ.

Titus 3:10-11—People who are warped and sinning being self-condemned.

1 Tim. 4:1-3—Men who speak lies in hypocrisy, whose conscious is seared, and who make up their own rules and regulations.

2 Thess. 2:1-4—Men who oppose God's will and exalts themselves above God, accepting the adoration that belongs to God, and usurping God's place in the church.

Rom. 16:17-18—Men who teach contrary to the doctrine of Christ, who do not serve Him, but their own bellies, and who by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Prov. 26:20; 21:23—A talebearer or one who will not guard his mouth and tongue.

Prov. 22:10—The scoffer.

Prov. 21:4—A haughty look and a proud heart.

Concluding Thoughts

It is sinful to stir up trouble that will lead to division in the church. God hates such (Prov. 6:19). Such persons are worldly-minded, carnally-minded—who mind the things of the world or of the flesh (Rom. 8:5-6). They are guilty of acting out of jealousy, anger, contempt, hate, malice, and conceit (2 Cor. 12:20). Attitudes are critical to unity!

Questions for Discussion

1. How do you identify a Divisive Person? Explain terms:

- a) Eritheia—
- b) Hairesis—
- c) Schisma—
- d) Dichostasia—

2. How is a divisive person described?

3. What is the fruit of Divisiveness?

4. What must be done to the divisive person?

Lesson Five

"Biblical Unity and Fellowship"

In our search for Biblical Unity, we have concluded that it exists because God has made us one upon our obedience to the Gospel that we accepted. It is taking people from all kinds of backgrounds and beliefs and bringing them into a relationship with God and one another that is called unity. This unity is in spite of those differences and the different levels of maturity among us. God made us "ONE" and He wants us to stay as "ONE!" So, it is up to us to keep this oneness among us that God originated—***"endeavoring to keep the unity (oneness) of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*** (Ephesians 4:3). We have also understood from our study that there are things that threaten that oneness that we enjoy in Christ. In other words, it is not *"once unified, always unified!"* We must be alert, watchful, and diligent in our efforts to keep this oneness among us.

We also have concluded from our study that "Ideal Unity" is something we strive for, but will never attain unto. It is like God's challenge for His people to be perfect as He is perfect, but we know that we shall not attain to that perfection. That unity or oneness is begun, maintained, and developed to a mature (complete, perfected) level in each congregation—if they are doing what God commands of them. If we can agree on the above thoughts, then we are ready to ask the important question: *"What can destroy this oneness where we no longer will have fellowship with one another?"* And this question leads to an even more important question: *"How and when does a Christian lose his oneness or fellowship with God?"* We want to look at the things that the Bible says can destroy our fellowship with one another and with God.

LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

It would seem to be logical that if we have fellowship with God (acceptable with Him), then we should also enjoy fellowship (unity) with one another. And as well, if we lose our fellowship with God, we also **SHOULD** lose it with one another! So, what could be said of one may or should apply to the other. Let's see some things that can cause us to lose our fellowship with God. The following would not necessarily be all that the Bible says on this matter.

1 John 1:5-7. Those who walk in darkness cannot have fellowship with God. But those who walk in the light can have fellowship not only with God, but with one another if we choose to do so.

1 John 2:3-6. Those who no longer keep God's commandments cannot have fellowship with God. Thus, those who do keep God's commandments do have fellowship with God.

1 John 2:8-11; 3:11-15; 4:7-8, 20; 5:2. The Christian who hates his fellow-Christian is walking in darkness and cannot have fellowship with God. To hate one's brother is the same as being a murderer and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. If we do not love our brother we do not know God. The way we know that we love or don't love our brother depends upon what we do with God's commandments in regards to our brother.

1 John 2:15-17. If the Christian goes back to loving the world, he loses his relationship with God.

1 John 2:18-19. When a Christian voluntarily leaves the people of God and desires to have no more fellowship with them, he also leaves the fellowship of God.

1 John 2:22-24; 4:1-3, 15; 5:5, 12-13; 2 John 7. To no longer believe that Jesus is the Christ is to lose one's fellowship with God. To no longer believe that Jesus came in the flesh is to lose one's fellowship with God. The same is true if one no longer believes Jesus to be the Son of God.

1 John 2:29; 3:7, 10. When one no longer walks or practices righteousness, he loses his fellowship with God.

1 John 3:8-9. The one who continues to practice sin shows that he desires fellowship with the devil rather than with God.

2 John 9. Those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ do not have fellowship with God any longer.

Jude 4. Those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness deny the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, do not have fellowship with God.

Jude 19. Those who are sensual, carnal and cause division have lost their fellowship with God because they do not have the Spirit of God in them. Those that do not have the Spirit of God (Christ) do not have fellowship with Him.

Possibly other Scriptures could be used to show the things that break one's fellowship with God, but hopefully these are sufficient to illustrate the possibility. These same things above should break our fellowship with one another as well, but often does not! Possibly, the greatest challenge to our understanding is at what point in the above things will our fellowship with God be broken? None of us are perfect—none of us are without sin in our lives, but hopefully we are dealing with them in God's appointed way. God knows where that line is—and generally, we can tell when someone has reached that line or beyond it by his actions. Our oneness with God depends upon our constant efforts to walk in the way of righteousness!

LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER

After so much stress on the oneness, unity, and harmony among God's people, the following thoughts at first may seem strange. God wants us to cut off our oneness with certain Christians! The following passages will illustrate this.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13. When a Christian walks in an ungodly or unrighteous activity and will not repent after efforts have been made to correct the situation, he is to be withdrawn from—to have no fellowship with him—to not keep company with—not even to eat with such a person. We are to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. We are to put away from ourselves this evil person. But, if afterwards he repents, we are to receive him again as a brother acceptable (2 Corinthians 2:5-8). We can be re-united with him.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. If a brother continues to walk disorderly (not after the traditions that have been taught) and will not repent, he is to be withdrawn from. Such a person is to be noted and God’s people are not to keep company with him so that he may be ashamed. He is not to be counted as an enemy, however, but admonish as a brother.

Matthew 18:15-17. Where a brother sins against another brother, the two of them are to work it out so they can maintain their unity (fellowship). But if they are unable to do so, the matter should be discussed in the presence of witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, it is then to be brought before the church. If the guilty person will not listen to the church, he is to be treated as a “heathen and a tax collector.” Their unity is gone—no longer to have fellowship together.

Romans 16:17-18. Those who teach things contrary to the doctrine of Christ and thereby cause divisions and offenses among God’s people, they are to be noted and avoided—to no longer have fellowship with! Their efforts to deceive the hearts of the people by their smooth words and flattering speech need to be stopped in the midst of the church.

Titus 3:9-11. The person who conducts foolish disputes, who causes contentions concerning genealogies, and stirs up strife concerning the law is a divisive person and needs to be rejected after a first and second admonition. This type person is warped and sinning and is self-condemned.

2 John 9-11. The person who will not abide in the teachings of Christ is not to be received in your homes, nor do you bid him God’s speed—for in doing so, you become a partaker in his evil deed. Don’t fellowship such a person!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Again, we suggest that this may not be all of what the Scriptures teach in regards to whom we are to cut off our fellowship from, but the above references show that such should be done in the varying situations mentioned. The unity with such people is broken because they no longer desire to let Jesus be the Lord of their life and they turn back into their old ways of living and believing. They are guilty of sin that leads to death (1 John 5:16-17).

God wants His people not only to be unified, but he wants us to deal properly with those things that can destroy that unity. If it cannot be solved with one or more persons, then fellowship is to be withdrawn from them in order to maintain

Lesson Six

"Biblical Unity and Teaching"

It should be an obvious truth that Biblical Unity does not come from people who teach or preach the doctrines, commands, and opinions of men, but by those who teach or preach the Bible! Biblical Unity is made possible and encouraged by teaching those things that are clearly taught in Scripture. It is brought about and maintained by those who teach what the Bible authorizes to be done, not by teaching what the Bible does not condemn. The Lord's church is being plagued by those who do not have a respect for the Lord's headship, but set themselves up as being smarter than God Himself. Division is promoted among God's people when men are exalted above that which is written (1 Corinthians 4:6) and when they do not feel that the Bible is enough to serve as a guide for man. Some of the most obvious evidences of this can be seen in the "councils of men" that began in the 4th century that made changes that led to the papacy as a replacement of Jesus as the head of the church. The Mormon religion came out with their own Bible that actually invalidates the True Word of God in their eyes. The Jehovah's Witnesses have done the same. But so has every church that has drawn up a creed to which men must subscribe in order to be a part of "their church." The Reformation Movement gave lip service to the concept of letting the Bible be the only guide, but in practice they have failed to show the proper respect for the Bible.

THE GRAVITY OF TEACHING

Men must recognize the gravity of striving to teach others the way to Eternal Life (James 3:1). The warning is plain, and the danger is real...the danger of being a "false teacher" and misleading people. We shall face a stricter judgment because we choose to teach. Jesus warned of the dangers of false teachers who wear "sheep's clothing" to disguise their true nature—"ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15). The differences between a "righteous teacher" and a "false teacher" can be seen in his **motives for teaching, in his life, and in what he does and does not teach**. The Scriptures are filled not only with the admonitions on what to teach, but on how to teach and how to live up to those teachings. There are also many Scriptures that identify who is a false teacher, what he teaches, his motives for teaching, and his life.

WHAT WE ARE ADMONISHED TO TEACH OR PREACH

Preach the Word. (2 Timothy 4:2)

Preach Sound Doctrine. (Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7-8; 2 Timothy 1:13)

Things previously taught by the Apostles. (2 Timothy 2:2; 3:14)

Traditions you were taught. (2 Thessalonians 2:15)
Preach Christ out of goodwill, love, and sincerity. (Philippians 1:14-18; 2:20)
Warn every man. (Colossians 1:28)
Teach with grace, seasoned with salt. (Colossians 4:6)
Speaking the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15)
To exhort, comfort, and charge every one. (1 Thessalonians 2:10-11)
To establish you and encourage you concerning your faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:2-3)
“These things” command and teach. (1 Timothy 4:6, 11)
Not to preach to please men. (1 Thessalonians 2:4)
Not to preach to satisfy itching ears. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
Not to preach to receive glory of men. (1 Thessalonians 2:5-6)
Not to preach out of shame of the gospel. (Romans 1:16)
Strive to live up to my teaching. (Philippians 1:27-28)
Be willing to sacrifice and suffer persecution for preaching truth. (Philippians 2:29-30)

HOW TO IDENTIFY A FALSE TEACHER Unless there is close association with such a person, it may be very hard to identify a false teacher by what little we may know of his life, unless he openly advocates ungodliness or unrighteousness. The Corinthian letter indicates that they can pose as ministers of righteousness, but they are not. They are deceitful, crafty and clever and camouflage their true identity. They are deceptive and cunningly devise a way to conceal their real purpose (Genesis 3:13; 2 Timothy 3:13; Ephesians 4:14; 5:6; 2 Peter 2:1-3).

BY HIS TEACHINGS:

- a) **Turn to weak and beggarly elements—teaching to observe days, months, seasons, and years.** (Galatians 4:9-11)
- b) **Empty words.** (Ephesians 5:6-7)
- c) **Teaching observances of Old Covenant.** (Colossians 2:16)
- d) **Teaching the worshipping of angels.** (Colossians 2:18)
- e) **Teach basic principles of the world, regulations—touch not, taste not, do not handle.** (Colossians 2:20-23)
- f) **Teach a lie.** (2 Thessalonians 2:11)
- g) **Teaching a rejecting of the faith.** (1 Timothy 1:19-20)
- h) **Teach doctrines of demons, speak lies in hypocrisy from a seared conscience—forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods.** (1 Timothy 4:1-5)
- i) **Teach fables, endless genealogies that cause disputes.** (1 Timothy 1:3-4)
- j) **Idle talk, erroneous teachers of the law from misunderstanding.** (1 Timothy 1:6-7)

- k) **Strive about words to no profit—profane and idle babblings that increase to more ungodliness.** (2 Timothy 2:14-16)
- l) **Teaching that the resurrection is already past.** (2 Timothy 2:18)
- m) **Teach things that are foolish and ignorant that leads to disputes and strife.** (2 Timothy 2:23)
- n) **Turn from truth and teach fables.** (2 Timothy 4:4)
- o) **Teach things that lead to foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, strivings about the law that is unprofitable and useless.** (Titus 3:9-11)

Simply stated, the false teacher turns to the authority of men and rejects the authority of God. He does not want to build a church and call it the church of Satan for he is too clever. He wants to turn the church of God into a church of Satan. The false teacher becomes the mouthpiece of Satan.

BY HIS MOTIVES FOR TEACHING FALSE THINGS:

- a) **They desire to pervert the gospel.** (Galatians 1:6-9)
- b) **He teaches to please men, not God.** (Galatians 1:10)
- c) **To rob us of our liberty in Christ and bring us into bondage.** (Galatians 2:4)
- d) **To hinder us from obeying the truth.** (Galatians 5:6)
- e) **Their god is their belly.** (Philippians 3:18-19)
- f) **To deceive with persuasive words.** (Colossians 2:4)
- g) **To cheat us through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world.** (Colossians 2:8)
- h) **To judge us and to cheat us of our reward in Christ.** (Colossians 2:16, 18)
- i) **To use flattering words to get gain and glory from men.** (1 Thessalonians 2:5-6)
- j) **To deceive.** (2 Timothy 3:13; Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9)

It should be obvious to the good Bible student that all of the above passages are not the full extent of what could be given on these things. However, we believe that sufficient references have been given to give a strong indication of the characteristics of false teachers. The curse of God rests upon the false teachers that would pervert the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:9; 5:10, 12), but the damage will still be done by their false teaching.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is important that we not only recognize false teachers, but know how to deal with such. We are warned to beware of them by Jesus (Matthew 7:15).

False teachers and false doctrines have been around for a long, long time. It started in the Garden of Eden by the serpent and it has continued ever since. There is a grave danger of being tolerant of such teachers to the point that their damage will become great. We are reluctant to denounce their false doctrines as well as to denounce them if they will not de cease. This gives them time to subvert whole houses, divide churches, lead multitudes away from the Lord. We certainly ought to manifest love and understanding towards such, but at the same time be diligent to correct the false teaching or stop them from teaching. God hates workers of iniquity (Psalm 5:5; 119:128). When we know that such teachers are in our midst, they need to be admonition; and if they will not stop their false teaching, to withdraw from them and have nothing to do with them (1 Timothy 6:3-5; Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11). We need to hear Biblical teaching and preaching!

Questions for Discussion

- 1. Why is proper and correct teaching and preaching so important?**
- 2. What are some things that the Scriptures stressed to be taught?**
- 3. What are some signs of a false teacher?**
- 4. What are some motives for the false teacher teaching his false doctrines?**
- 5. What are the dangers of being too easy on false teachers?**

