

The Better Way

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SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.
Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.
(via Zoom Meetings)

ELDERS

David P. Brown
Ken Cohn
John West

DEACONS

Bret Bailey
J. D. Gunter
Eric Paluka

EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

SECRETARY

Sonya West

WE MUST NOT FELLOWSHIP DENOMINATIONS

Andrew M. Connally

Far too many of our brethren have forgotten the restrictions of God's word concerning fellowship. God's word has said,

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? ... Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-17; ASV).

Clearly we see there are those we can *not* have religious fellowship with nor remain unequally yoked with them.

In days like these, the church in many places has been remiss in her obligation to enforce discipline of the ungodly. As a result anything goes! Neither the immoral, heretics, nor denominational error has been marked nor withdrawn from. Our lassitude, neglect, and permissiveness has allowed many to remain abominably ignorant of what God's word teaches or what Christ expects in these matters.

Elders and preachers in seeking to promote peace and prosperity in the congregations have allowed multiplied errors to go unchecked. Members openly flaunt error on what the Bible teaches on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, morality, ethics, and fellowship. Drinkers, dancers, and dividers have been allowed to remain in full fellowship. Preachers have fraternized with the sects and denominations until it is hard to distinguish them from denominational preachers. Many of the members have been left to believe the church is just another denomination of one sort or another. Such attitudes and beliefs are contrary to the scriptures and make a mockery of the church, the body of Christ. And those who persist in such error until death will be lost!

ARE WE MEMBERS OF A DENOMINATION?

Before we can answer such a question we must know what a denomination is. It is a "class, society, or collection of individuals called by the same name; a religious sect—denominational, pertaining to or characterizing a denomination; pertaining to particular religious denominations or bodies" (*Webster: Encyclopedia Dictionary of the English Language*. p. 229). Notice the designation "a religious sect," which means, "a body or numbers of persons who follow some teacher or leader, or are united in some settled tenets, chiefly in philosophy or religion; a school, a denomination" (*Ibid*, p. 759). A simple reading of the above definition shows a complete lack of anything divine in the

makeup of a sect or denomination. It does not necessarily contain truth, salvation, or godliness. It is partisan by nature, concept, and application. Nothing could be further from God's definition of the church, the body of Christ. As a result, no denomination believes or teaches you have to only believe their doctrine to be saved, or that they contain all the saved or preach all the truth of God. By its very nature and definition a denomination must be human, divisive, and defective.

But back to our original question: Are we members of a denomination? Denominations preach unity in diversity. They seek to amalgamate all believers into denominational confines by being broadminded and overlooking specifics and uniting on generalities. Christians strongly believe in unity (John 17:20, 21), but know nothing of unity without a "thus saith the Lord" (1 Pet. 4:11). Believing the scriptures, and the scriptures alone, is our rule of faith and practice (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:34; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Denominationalism believes in union rather than unity. This is a big flaw in the ecumenical movement. Denominationalism seeks to base their union on a desire for fellowship rather than on the acceptance of God's will (1 John 1:6-8). "Oneness" between man is based on a "oneness in Christ"; faith must precede union (Eph. 4:5). The only way men can be one is by being one in faith, and oneness in faith is based on the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The revealed will of God begets faith in our hearts (Eph. 4:13) and therefore, no unity can exist separate and apart from the word of God. Hence denominational union is completely foreign to members of the true body of Christ.

Men can join a denomination but God adds them to the church (Acts 2:47). One of the great truths of the New Testament is found in the enrollment in heaven of the members of the body of Christ by our heavenly Father (See Phi. 4:4; Heb. 10:23). This great truth alone shows we are not members of a denomination because we are members of the "**church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**" (Heb. 12:23).

Not only so, but to be a member of a denomination is to practice the sin of division. Christ is not divided and therefore all such sectarian division is sinful. For Paul admonishes, "**that ye all speak the same thing,**

and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). No denominational preacher ever preached such words nor can one of their members ever pray such a prayer, for to do so is to cut the foundation from under their doctrine!

IS THE CHURCH THEN A DENOMINATION?

Emphatically not! Those in or out of our fellowship who believe or teach that the body of Christ is a denomination are woefully ignorant of the fundamentals of faith. The church is a blood bought institution. Jesus was slain in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20), yet His death was for the church (Acts 20:28). The church itself is part of the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 5:26) for the salvation of all men (Eph. 5:27). No denomination could ever make or substantiate such a claim. Hence, the church is divine in origin, doctrine, worship, and in fellowship. God alone decides these matters.

Therefore, the church is non-denominational. It is neither Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. It is not the product of "reformation" or "restoration," but rather is the product of the divine seed being sown in the hearts of men (Luke 8:11). This divine seed produces only one fruit: Christians only (1 Pet. 4:16). They make up the family of God (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15). Every child God is in His family, the church; therefore God has no children in the denominations of men! No denomination will claim they constitute all of God's children; therefore they are not the church, for the church *does* contain *all* of God's children.

Jesus has decreed the destruction of all religious institutions other than His church. While He is the "**saviour of the body**" (Eph. 5:23), He said "**every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up**" (Mat. 15:13). Therefore to remain in them until death or to promote their efforts will cause one to be lost!

Since the church is divine in origin it is only fitting "that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 18:18). Denominations may come and go but all the forces of the unseen world will not overcome the church. Her destiny is sealed, her direction is fixed, and her deliverance will not be delayed. God Himself has so decreed.

BUT CAN WE EXTEND THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP TO DENOMINATIONALISM?

God forbid! If fellowship of the denominations is allowed by God, then in what realm is it allowed? In the realm of worship? Jesus said, **“God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:23). Every denomination in the land has prostituted the worship of God. Each of them is governed by the silence of the scriptures. They operate on the principle of whatever God has not forbidden He allows. But you and I know this will never do. That which God allows, accepts, and authorizes has been stated in the New Testament. Paul says, **“And whatsoever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”** (Col. 3:17). In other words, only what Jesus authorizes is allowed. Consider the fact that we are **“not to go beyond the things that are written”** (1 Cor. 4:6).

How then can we fellowship the denominations in their worship which includes: instrumental music, tithing, the Lord’s Supper at anytime, except weekly (Acts 20:7); sprinkling; missionary societies; speaking in tongues; healings, etc.

If we can’t fellowship them in worship, and we cannot, can we fellowship them at all? If so, how? Fellowship in the brotherhood of believers is dependent on **“walking in the light”** (1 John 1:6, 7). There can be no Bible fellowship unless both parties are **“walking in the light.”** Denominational people have *not* **“obeyed the gospel”** (1 Pet. 4:17). They do not **“worship in spirit and truth”** (John 4:23), and therefore do *not* **“walk in the light,”** so how could we extend the right hand of fellowship to them? God has already spoken on this.

WHY DOES GOD FORBID THE FELLOWSHIPING OF DENOMINATIONS?

Finally we are faced with the above question. God knows us better than we know ourselves (John 2:25). He knows the danger of being captured by religious error. Therefore, He warns:

Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ (Col. 2:8).

This is a distinct possibility as innumerable cases have shown.

There is the possibility that by our association with error we shall **“fall from our own steadfastness”** (2 Pet. 3:16, 17). Can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned? No, and neither can we fellowship error without it rubbing off on us. **“Be not deceived; evil associations corrupt good morals”** (1 Cor. 15:33).

Thirdly, God is a jealous God (2 Cor. 11:2) and He refuses to allow us to commit spiritual adultery (Jam. 4:4) with impunity. God expects and demands our full allegiance and complete loyalty always. He knows our minds will be corrupted away from the **“purity and simplicity which is in Christ”** (2 Cor. 11:3) by such fraternization. To do so is to commit spiritual adultery.

Lastly, the belief and practice of any error hinders the truth and all who do such shall finally be condemned (Rom. 1:18). They who are guilty of such **“have no love for the truth”** (2 The. 2:11-12) despite their pious protestations otherwise. It becomes a matter of allowing our own fallible feelings to guide and govern us instead of **“walking by faith”** based on a **“thus saith the Lord.”** This is really what it all amounts to. Human wisdom has always been the enemy of God (1 Cor. 1:20-31).

Brethren, we cannot afford to be **“partakers of their evil deeds”** (2 John 9:11). We cannot become **“partakers with them”** (Eph. 5:7); neither can we have **“fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather even reprove them”** (Eph. 5:11). This is our task, this limits our fellowship, this defines our relationship in the religious world, and may God have mercy on the men of the church who refuse to heed God’s sacred injunctions!~

Deceased

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USE THE TIDE

Author Unknown

An old gentleman states that when he was a small boy, he lived on the coast. One morning after a great storm he saw an old ship stranded. The storm had blown her in, and she was badly damaged and deserted by her crew. He said that often when the tide would come in strongly and surround the old ship she would almost be loosed from her moorings and go out. He stated that he would often go and stand by her and hope she would go out. He would say, Go out, old ship; go out with the tide." But she never did. Finally, one morning after a severe storm he went down to look at the old ship, but the storm had blown her to pieces. Only the floating pieces of the old wreck were to be seen. She had many an opportunity, but she never went out.

How like the backslider! The tide of opportunity to repent has risen for many and it is hoped they would go out from their sinful ways; but they settled back and never went out. Friends, if we are not living as we should, we had better take advantage of the opportunity to repent while the tide is in. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5). Remember, "I have heard thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Friends, now is the only time we are guaranteed—for the tide may soon be out. Think about it!~

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Tuesday, June 25th:** Ladies' Bible Class. Teacher: Barbara Bailey. Lesson: "The Joy Of Service."
- **Sunday, June 30th:** Monthly meal & afternoon singing service.
- **Mon-Wed, July 15th-17th:** VBS at Spring. Theme: "Parables Of Jesus."
- **Saturday, September 28th:** Fall Fellowship at Walker County Fairgrounds, Huntsville, TX.
- **Saturday, October 26th:** Fish Hatchery Rd. Lectureship. "James: Practical Christianity Part 3."
- **Saturday, November (TBA):** Chili Cook-off

THOSE TO SERVE

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024

Announcements	Ken Cohn
Scripture Reading	Eric Paluka <i>Rev. 16:8-16</i>
Song Leader	Bret Bailey
Prayer	J.D. Gunter/Stephen Cohn (AM) Gary Blasingame/ Eric Paluka (PM)
Speaker	David Brown
Lord's Table (AM) (Mark 15:33-39)	
J.D. Gunter	Andrew Paluka
Steven Johnson	Gary Blasingame
Lord's Table (PM)	
Joshua West	Ben Gunter
Audio/Video Monitor	Joshua West
Camera/Door Monitor	Gary Blasingame

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024

(via Zoom Meetings)

Announcements	Eric Paluka
Speaker	J.D. Gunter
Bible Class Teacher	David Brown

FOR JUNE

Prepare Communion	West
Lock Buildings	Bailey
Prepare Bulletin Board	N. Cohn

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Zack Nero, Debbie Brannon, Edith Young, Noah & Glenda Hackworth, Cynthia Jackson, Elnora Oxendine, Charles & Ann Nero, Nathaniel Rimmer, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Orlinda Chumbley, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Can one pray without uttering a sound?

Answer to last week's question:
Samson; Judges 14