

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Problem of Denominations

Ladies, have you ever been invited to dinner at a friend's house, and been served a dish you knew you just had to have the recipe to because it tasted so good? When you ask the host or hostess for the recipe, they gladly comply and give it to you. Your husband gets excited at the prospect of having this delicious dish at home without having to sneak over to the Joneses from now on to get it. A week or two goes by, and you decide to try fixing it yourself. You're a health nut, however, and so when the dish calls for milk, you substitute half & half. When it calls for sugar, you put in artificial sweetener instead. When it calls for vanilla, you put in artificial vanilla instead. You mix it all together and proudly serve it to your husband, who dives right in with gusto...for the first bite. You notice that he takes his time with the second bite...and appears to suddenly have a great desire to eat it out on the balcony by himself with the third bite. He comes back in ten seconds later, claiming a big bird swooped right in and

snatched it right off his plate...but "Honestly, honey, I really enjoyed the three bites I had. However, I did notice that it tastes a little different than it did at the Joneses. Did you follow the recipe?" You think it sweet of him to try to butter you up so he doesn't spend the entire night on the couch, and so you explain to him that, in the interests of eating healthy, you substituted the less healthier items on the recipe for healthier items. Being male, he then tries to explain to you that eating *tastefully*, not healthy, is what really matters to him, and urges you to follow the recipe fully next time so that it will be exactly like it was at the Joneses. You thank him for his advice, and tell him that you'll ponder it all night long while he's sleeping on the couch...

It is interesting how many of us think substitutions can be made and still be the same. It should be apparent that one cannot make substitutions and have the "real thing." It is that way with recipes, and it is also that way with the church of our Lord Jesus. Sadly, denominationalism has brought about

many substitutions and changes. Why is it that people think they have the real thing when so many substitutions have been made?

Some don't realize it, but there are all kinds of differences between denominations and the church you read about in the New Testament. In most denominations there is a clergy system with priests, pastors, and/or "Reverends" and "Fathers." Often times there is a national, and sometimes an international, governing body. Some denominations have deacons, but a "Pastor" rather than elders. Others have elders who are bachelors, or women serving as elders.

Yet, the Bible teaches that Christ is the only head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), and therefore there is no authority in the New Testament for a church hierarchy. Every member of the Lord's church is a priest (1 Pet. 2:9), so there is no authority in the New Testament for a clergy system. The church is overseen by a plurality of elders (Acts 20:17) and served by deacons (Phil. 1:1), so there is no authority in the New Testament for a lone man being an elder. Elders are to be married and have believing children (1 Tim. 3:2,4; Tit. 1:6), so there is no authority for bachelor elders. Women are not to exercise authority over men in the church (1 Tim. 2:12; 3:14-15), and elders are required to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2), which negates the idea of a female elder.

Denominationalism is different than what is taught in the Bible. How different depends upon which denomination. Many denominations teach that one becomes a Christian, a child of God, merely by "asking Jesus to come into one's heart." One is then accepted into the denomination based upon a

testimony of conversion. Sometimes one is voted into the denomination. In other cases, one is sprinkled (not baptized) as a non-believing infant. Years later, after taking instruction, one is "confirmed." One then is a member of the denomination. Other denominations have even different requirements.

However, the Bible teaches that one enters the body of Christ which is the church through baptism (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23). When one who has confessed his faith in Christ as the Son of God and has repented of sins is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-38), God adds that person to the church (Acts 2:47). It is not a matter of "joining" the church or a denomination. It is also at that point that one becomes a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27) and has his or her sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

Substitutions and changes have been made in denominations. Many denominational worship services center around entertainment, having bands, concerts, skits, drama presentations, and even aerobic acts. Musical instruments have been added, and the Lord's Supper has been taken away, being served only at certain times. In other denominations, burning of incense and the counting of beads have been added, along with statue worship. Saturday worship has replaced or been added to the first day of the week.

Yet, the Bible sets out God's authorized manner of worship. The early church met upon every first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper and to give as they had prospered (Acts 20:6-7; 1 Cor. 11:20-34; 16:1-2). Prayers were offered up in worship (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15) as well as songs of praise sung by

saints with the instrument they plucked being their hearts (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). There was also edification as they were taught God's doctrine (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7).

Friends, we all should realize and teach others that the same principle that applies to recipes applies to Christianity. If you want the real thing, there can be no substitutions and/or changes. Deuteronomy 4:2 says, ***"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."*** Proverbs 30:5-6 says, ***"Every word of God is tested...Do not add to his words or he will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar."*** Paul warned the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4:6 to ***"learn not to exceed what is written..."*** The Bible closes with the warning of Revelation 22:18-19: ***"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."***

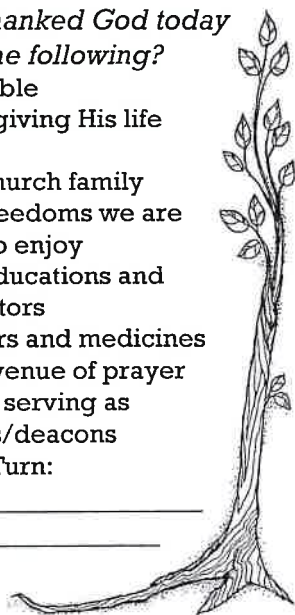
If you want the church of the Bible, the church of God's choice, it must be according to his instructions found in his Word alone. Otherwise, you have a man-made substitute, not the real thing. If you don't have the real thing, then salvation is not yours because Jesus is the Savior of those who are in his body, the church (Eph. 5:23). It's something to think about.

Jon Mitchell

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: *Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.*

1) PREPARE FOR OUR GOSPEL MEETING

Mark 16:15 *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'"*

We have a gospel meeting coming up, starting on October 11, with brother Tony Huntsman speaking for us that week. The success of a meeting depends greatly upon how much effort goes into it before it even starts. Some of the ways we can all take part are:

- a) invite friends
- b) invite family
- c) invite co-workers
- d) talk about it and invite people via Facebook or Twitter
- e) post flyers for the meeting up around the community
- f) if possible, adjust your work schedule to be able to attend each night
- g) leave invitations on tables at restaurants with the tip

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Acts 20:28-35

28 "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. **29** I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30** and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. **31** Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. **32** And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. **33** I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. **34** You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. **35** In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"