

What is REAL Christianity?

**Book 1:
Lessons 1-4**

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NOT FOR SALE

Bible Study Center

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Book 1 – Lessons 1-4

Welcome!

As in the cases of our previous courses, this 12-lesson Bible study course has been designed to educate, inform, challenge, and inspire people to become more active participants in the revealed will of God. Having already completed our courses **Jesus: Man of the Bible** and **Jesus: Lord of our Lives**, you have come a long way in that journey. This course will take you down the next path and its material has been designed to complement our in class discussion and so follows the lesson progression of the classroom material.

The reason why we need this course is all of the different things being taught and practiced in the more than 38,000 religious groups today, which **CLAIM** to be Christians while teaching their own particular set of doctrines and practices! Since most of these differences in some way relate back to the Bible, it is necessary to study them to find out which teachings today are correct.

The way the course works is simple. We will send you the course material in booklets of four lessons at one time. To properly study through the course, you will need the lesson material, a Bible you can use for your reading assignments, the test question answer sheet, and something with which to write. Study each lesson carefully. Be sure to stop and read all of the passages carefully¹ and then work through all of the exercises found in the test questions section for each lesson. Some lessons also have supplementary **HANDOUTS** or **WORKSHEETS** included. If you encounter the symbol  then please **STOP** reading the lesson material at that point and complete the research assignment before returning to the lesson material. We have also provided you with a notebook in which you can record your findings when you read and study different passages in the Bible.

You have the first four (4) lessons. Once you complete all of the test questions simply return the answer sheet to us for grading. We will check and record your grades for our records and **if you score at least 70%**, we will return the graded answer sheet to you along with Book 2 of the course. If you make below 70% we will send you another answer sheet and ask you to restudy the lesson booklet. We will follow this procedure throughout the course.

We hope that you will learn much from this study. There may be some things in the course that seem “different” from what you might have heard in religion before. We are not asking you to agree or disagree with anything in the course; all we are hoping is that you will study through all of the course material before you make any conclusions.

If at any time you have questions about anything in your study, please feel free to bring them to class with you. We will do our very best to help you find the answers you seek. As a final thought before you start, please remember that we have gone to great lengths to make this study **FREE** of both cost and obligation. There is no tuition and by agreeing to take this course, you are not changing your religion or joining a religious group. All we are asking you to provide is the time to study and the postage to send back your answer sheet. We sincerely hope that you enjoy your study and learn many new things about God and the Bible!

¹ **NOTE:** Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotations contained in the lesson material come from the Easy-To-Read version.

LESSON ONE

"So That They All MAY BE ONE"

Worldwide there are more than
38,000 different groups!

- Each one **CLAIMS** to follow Christ!
- Each one **CLAIMS** to follow the Bible!
- Each one **CLAIMS** to be Christian!

And yet...

NO TWO GROUPS

teach the same things!

Is this really a good thing?

Is **THIS** what Jesus died for?

The writer of the book of Psalms wrote, "*It is truly a good and pleasant thing when God's people live together in peace.*" (Ps. 133:1) There has never been a greater need for this unity than today. Religious confusion grows and **UNITY** is not something we see much of. In past discussions, we have **REPEATEDLY** brought out the reality that in our world today there are **more than 38,000 religious groups²** who **CLAIM to be Christians**, who **CLAIM to follow the Bible**, and who **CLAIM to be the RIGHT church!** However, as we also pointed out, **NO TWO GROUPS TEACH THE SAME THINGS!**

Shortly before he was crucified on the cross Jesus prayed, "*I pray for these men. But I am also praying for all people that will believe in me because of the teaching of these men.*"

Father, I pray that all people that believe in me can be one. You are in me and I am in you. I pray that these people can also be one in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me." (John 17:20-21)

So.... If God wants everyone to be ONE then why are there so many religious groups today? Is this a good thing?

If you take a good look around these days you will notice that there are very many different "**KINDS**" of Christians. There are "Catholic" Christians, "Protestant" Christians, many kinds of "Baptist" Christians, "Born Again" Christians, "Evangelical" Christians, "Charismatic" Christians, "Mormon" Christians, "Jehovah's Witnesses" Christians, "Iglesia ni Cristo" Christians, and a whole bunch of additional groups that are not so well known. All of these groups CLAIM that they are trying to follow God's will, call themselves Christians, and yet they use different names, accept different teachings, and very often oppose each other while claiming to be united with Christ! From our point of view it is very confusing and considering the prayer of Jesus, mentioned above, one must ask if this situation is something which makes Jesus happy! A difficult question, "**Which group is the correct one, that I should belong to?**", continues to come into our minds time and time again and many people simply jump from one group to the next looking for something which to them **FEELS like genuine Christianity**. Have you ever had this experience? Have you ever felt like the situation is hopeless because while everyone seems to be talking about love for God and Jesus, they are all saying different things? If you have, then we believe that this study course will help you sort things out and come to a better understanding about what God really expects from people who belong to HIM!

One thing we must know as we begin our study is that disunity and division are not **NEW THINGS** that only happened recently. If you will think back to your previous studies, we found evidence that the disunity we see today had its beginnings during the time of original Christianity. We looked at passages that warned the readers not to change any teachings and not to listen to people who claimed to be genuine but who **were teaching DIFFERENT things** from what the original apostles taught. This was a problem back then just as it is a problem today. Please turn to and read carefully **1 Corinthians 1:10-13**. What is the topic being discussed by the writer? It is **UNITY!**

We see that there was indeed division among the believers at Corinth - **AND - more importantly that this division came about when the people began to follow the ideas of certain men and not Christ**. Paul tried to show that it was wrong for Christians to follow either Peter or himself. If the apostle Paul spoke against division in the early church then it must surely be wrong in Christianity today also! Our devotion must be to Christ alone, not to the teachings of different religious teachers.

² This number is almost **DOUBLE** what it was in 1980! If things do not change what will it be in 2040?

The division that began during the time of the New Testament has continued throughout time and developed into the confusing religious picture that we see around us today, and yet **there MUST be a way** to get beyond the confusion and experience the **TRUE Christianity** which Jesus gave his life for! The solution to religious division is not simple. The picture of religious division we see today has taken centuries to develop and we cannot expect to stop the process overnight! But who would dare suggest that the prayer for **UNITY** that Jesus made to his Father all those many hundreds of years ago as he prepared himself for death cannot become a reality?

What CAUSES division and disunity?

Before unity can be accomplished, the causes of division must be removed and so let us discuss some of them.

To begin with, **ignorance of God's word** is a contributing factor to division. Many years ago the prophet Hosea wrote, *"My people are destroyed because they have no knowledge."* (**Hosea 4:6**) When people do not know what the Bible really teaches they can easily be deceived and become dependent upon following what others tell them to do. This can make a person an easy target of false teachers who promote the teachings of men. Many sincere people are unable to distinguish between truth and error because they simply do not know what the Bible teaches, or how to study it. Some people simply don't see any need to study for themselves while others believe that daily "reading" of the Bible is the same as "studying" it. Remember that in a learning situation, reading your lesson and studying your lesson are two very different things! How often do you really study the Bible?

A second cause of division is the habit people often have of **following men rather than God**. Please read **1 Corinthians 11:1** and notice how Paul warned the Corinthians to **follow him only as he followed Christ**. While it is true that we cannot get along without religious leaders and teachers, we should not follow them "blindly", as Jesus point out in **Matthew 15:14**. Today, some people are even taught that they should allow their leaders to do their Bible study and thinking for them. It is often taught that the Bible is too difficult for "ordinary people" to understand, and, that religious leaders are the best people to "interpret" the Bible because they are professionals who spent many years in special Bible schools and seminaries. This is simply not true and the fact of the matter is that some religious leaders teach things that are wrong! If we follow those wrong teachings then we will also be wrong! Please read carefully **Mark 7:6-9**. What was Jesus speaking about in this passage? He was speaking about religious leaders teaching **WRONG** things and the people believing and following those wrong things. Jesus pointed out that following those wrong teachings made the devotion of the people to God useless! As we have shown in previous lessons, the common people of the 1st Century were able to understand the message even though many were not very educated and they were expected to understand it and follow it! The message was written to be understood by anyone³ who will take time to study it and so **IF** the uneducated people of the 1st century could read and understand it then those of us living today should be capable of understanding the message too. Let us follow religious teachers **only when their teachings agree with what is written in the Bible!**

A third cause, which is closely related to the second, is the fact that behind most religious division we find **different interpretations of the Scriptures**. As we pointed out in previous discussions, to "interpret" something means to explain it **in light of your own belief, judgment, or opinion**. The dangerous part of this definition is the part that refers to the influence of opinion upon the explanation. Because different people can look at a single situation in entirely different ways⁴ it is therefore possible for two people to look at a passage in the Bible and come to different (even opposing) interpretations. If there are two opposing conclusions then common sense tells us that both cannot be completely right. This explains how we can find two different religious groups today, each one reading from the same passage of the Bible, and yet coming up with different explanations and teachings. Since we are to, **UNDERSTAND** and not **INTERPRET** the message of the Bible,⁵ then we should not compromise. **We must study the Bible carefully and be certain that our understanding is correct**. Division, resulting from a conflict between truth and error, is very often caused by people insisting that we follow the personal interpretations of one person or another. This is wrong!

Making important issues out of things that do not matter to God is a fourth cause of division. The introduction of human traditions and statements of faith (creeds) have created many popular practices seen in religion today, which cannot be found in the Bible, and yet many people accept and follow these teachings as if they are true and legitimate. Almost always these are simply the teachings of men who lived hundreds of years ago that have since

³ Please read **2 Corinthians 1:12-14**.

⁴ Remember our illustration from **Jesus: Man of the Bible, Lesson 4**, called "WHAT IS IT?" where students were asked to look at a drawing and tell what they THOUGHT it was about? Each person gave their own OPINION and, as it turned out, none of the opinions was correct!

⁵ Please review the material found in **Jesus: Man of the Bible, Lesson 4**, regarding **2 Peter 1:20-21**.

been "accepted" by people as being from God and something for all people to follow. Of course, not everything taught in the various religious groups today is error, but there are many groups that have teachings, which they trace to their "traditions", which are in direct conflict with what the Bible really teaches and if you and I cannot distinguish between those man-made teachings and the true teachings that come from God then we may be sincerely following a path which will lead us to death! (Remember **Proverbs 14:12?**)

The fact that differences in beliefs and practices between groups exist created a great need to be able to tell the difference between one group and another. A simple answer to this problem came about when groups began the practice of taking unique names that would set them apart from the others. This practice of "giving a name" is where the word and idea of "denomination" came from. Therefore, a **DENOMINATION** is a group of followers who have a unique set of beliefs, practices, and name that makes them different from other groups, and **DENOMINATIONALISM** is the word used to describe the idea, which teaches that Christianity is made up of not one particular church but of any and all churches that claim to believe in Christ and follow him, even though they have different names and practices! Therefore, the question we must carefully consider is this, "**Since Jesus prayed for his followers to be ONE, is HE happy with all the different denominations existing today, or does he really want only ONE church?**" This is the major goal of our study in this course!

***Since Jesus prayed, in John chapter 17, for his followers
"to be ONE", is his prayer being answered today in
DENOMINATIONALISM?***

GOD has a plan - "Unite EVERYONE WITH CHRIST!"

As we have pointed out in past lessons, it is very difficult to find two groups today that teach exactly the same things and many contradict one another. Many religious leaders today recognize the need to seek unity. Unfortunately, the closest you will find them trying to achieve unity is through the suggestion that all existing groups should combine their resources together into one gigantic religious group,⁶ while each member group maintains its individual teachings and name. **This would be "union" but it would not be "unity"!** **UNION** implies the joining of forces for a common purpose, but **UNITY** implies a likeness of thinking as well as a common purpose! This could not be true with the above plan because no single group wants to give up their individual beliefs and practices. In fact, one of the main reasons why the effort has so far failed is the problem of deciding which group would take the lead in the effort, and so we are left with the confusing religious picture we see in our world today! We cannot simply ignore the different teachings and beliefs and tell people of different religious convictions to "be friends" when one thinks the other is wrong in the eyes of God!

As we try to find a solution to the problem of **DENOMINATIONALISM**, the simple removal of the causes of division will not produce unity. **A positive foundation of agreement must replace the present system.** Many past unity efforts have failed because they sought to unite men with one another instead of uniting them with Christ. He is our common foundation and while we may never completely agree with each other, we **ALL** should be able to agree with Jesus.

Unity with Christ implies complete acceptance of his absolute authority. He himself declared to the world that he has this authority. (Please read **Matthew 28:18-19.**) With the words, "*After going you make followers of all people...*", Jesus sent his followers out to unite all people everywhere to himself. Their teachings, as well as those of Jesus himself, are found in the 27 books of the New Testament. Therefore, to unite with Christ we must accept the complete authority of the New Testament writings. Most people today who believe that the Bible came from God recognize that the New Testament is the authority in religion today. But what exactly does it mean when we say that we accept the Bible as "our authority in religion"? **It means that we must agree that the things written inside are truth, that ALL of the truth we need to know is contained inside of it, and that we must submit to whatever we are instructed to do - without question.** We may not agree with each other regarding every possible detail, but as long as we will teach only what the Bible teaches, leaving out our own opinions, then we will be able to find the unity Christ spoke of in his prayer. Division in religion today is not caused by what the Bible says, but by **what the Bible DOES NOT say!** When someone tries to force others to do something he or she likes but is not taught in the Bible then others will justifiably rebel because no person has the authority to expect people to do something that God did not command! This is why unity can only be achieved if everyone agrees to let go of anything and everything that is NOT taught by God and agree to seek unity on **WHAT HE SAYS!**

⁶ This idea is often called **ECUMENISM**.

If we say that we accept the authority of the New Testament then we are saying that we will practice the same Christianity which is found there. In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul describes the foundation for unity. Please read **Ephesians 4:1-6**. Notice how he gives a LIST of seven things upon which all people claiming to follow Christ must be united. Paul says that underlying them all is **LOVE** because regardless of how much agreement we may have – regarding what we should and should not teach -- there can never be true unity unless there is love.⁷

As we look at the verses in Ephesians 4, not many religious people today have a difficult time accepting the fact that there is only one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, and one God. Even in its present divided condition the religious world agrees almost completely upon these matters. But this same passage also teaches that there is only one body, one faith, and one baptism. Since the apostle Paul himself tells us, in passages like **Ephesians 1:22-23** and **Colossians 1:18**, that the word "body" in his writings refers to Christ's church, then we must therefore agree that there is really only one church: which is the **UN-denominational** group of believers belonging to Jesus Christ. We also must recognize the reality that since the Bible speaks of only "one faith" then **it really does make a difference what we believe, what we practice, and what we teach!** Only a faith that is based upon God's word is acceptable to him - no matter how confident and secure a person feels in the heart. Please do not forget what we learned from our study of **Matthew 7:21-23!** Remember how Jesus says that "many" who are very religious, who possess supernatural powers, and **who FEEL very secure** about their faith will not enter heaven because all of the "things" they did were simply "not the will of the Father".⁸

Therefore, **UNITY IS POSSIBLE** if all people will submit to God's authority! We will look deeper into the topic of authority in our next lesson.

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 1:

Each of the following questions has several possible answers. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Use only the answer sheet spaces numbered 1-25 for recording your answers.

- The estimated number of religious groups in the world today who claim to be Christians is
 - around 1,000.
 - around 5,000.
 - more than 20,000.
 - more than 100,000.
- Which of the following is the **MOST** important?
 - Learn how to study the Bible for yourself and do your own research.
 - Find a good teacher and accept whatever they say.
 - Ask your friends about religion and accept whatever they tell you.
 - Join a church that teaches what you want to hear.
- A verse in which Jesus **prays for unity** is
 - 1 Cor. 10:13
 - John 17:20-21
 - Romans 3:23
 - 1 Cor. 1:10-13
- TRUE or FALSE: God **accepts** all the different religious divisions and groups in the world today.
 - True
 - False
- What is a "**Denomination**"?
 - a group of people called together for "worship"
 - is a group of followers who have a unique set of beliefs, practices, and name that make them different from other groups
 - a meeting place
 - another word for "translation"
- What caused the divisions **at Corinth**?
 - people following teachings of certain men instead of Christ
 - people following their own desires
 - People ignoring the warnings of the apostles.
 - All of the above
- TRUE or FALSE: There **IS** a solution to the problem of Unity.
 - True
 - False
- According to our lesson, which of the following **is a cause** for disunity in religion today?
 - Ignorance of God's word
 - Good Bible study habits
 - Application of Bible study skills
 - None of the above

⁷ It is important to always remember that when the Bible mentions "love" it usually speaks of the idea of DOING what is best for another person regardless of how you feel about them. This is what many call "**AGAPE love**". It is a love which is SHOWN BY ACTION! This is the love Jesus had for mankind and it is this love which motivates us to want to be united with him.

⁸ Here is another example of the point we learned in **Proverbs 14:12!**

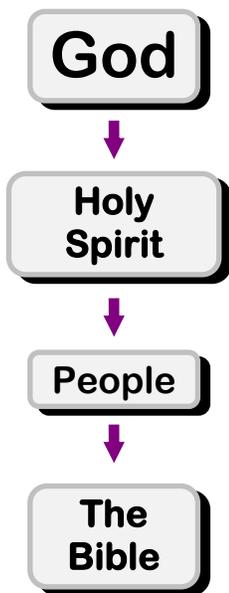
9. TRUE or FALSE: We **can** believe and accept anything our religious leaders tell us.
- True
 - False
10. TRUE or FALSE: Ordinary people **cannot** understand the Bible and therefore **should not** try to study.
- True
 - False
11. What was Jesus talking about in **Mark 7:6-9**?
- Religious teachers who always taught the truth.
 - The day when he returns
 - Where they were going next
 - Religious leaders teaching wrong teachings and people following them.
12. TRUE or FALSE: It is acceptable for each person to have and believe his or her own **interpretation** of God's word.
- True
 - False
13. **Understanding** means:
- Giving your opinion about something.
 - Asking your teachers about something and accepting whatever they say without question.
 - Accepting the explanation or teaching that comes from the author.
 - Accepting whatever explanation we want.
14. What was the point of **2 Peter 1:20-21**?
- The scripture should be understood and NOT interpreted.
 - Man doesn't know the way in which he should walk.
 - All scripture comes from God.
 - None of the above.
15. Human **traditions** and "**creeds**":
- must be believed.
 - are given by God.
 - are teachings of men.
 - None of the above.
16. "**Ecumenism**" is:
- A disease.
 - Disunity.
 - Conflicting groups joining together to make one group
 - A teaching that came from Jesus.
17. What is the **major reason** why attempts at unity between different religious groups have failed?
- People do not want to give up their beliefs and practices
 - People study the Bible like they should
 - There is no need for unity, because everyone already agrees
 - Jesus doesn't want everyone to be one group.
18. What is **supposed** to be our authority in Religion?
- Our religious teachers
 - Our own feelings and opinions
 - The Bible
 - Commentaries and articles
19. Finish this quote: "Division in religion today is not caused by what the Bible says, but":
- "by improper Bible study"
 - "by people who are too legalistic"
 - "by what the Bible does not say"
 - "by bad translations"
20. What is the most important thing Paul mentions in **Ephesians 4:1-6**?
- Meekness
 - Patience
 - Humility
 - Love
21. What do we learn from **Matthew 7:21-23**?
- All religious people are going to heaven
 - We must follow whatever God says
 - It doesn't matter what we believe and follow
 - As long as we feel close to God we are going to heaven
22. The "**one body**" Paul refers to in Ephesians and Colossians is
- Christ's church
 - A physical body
 - All denominations
 - None of the above
23. TRUE or FALSE: Christ's church, the REAL church, is UN-Denominational.
- True
 - False
24. TRUE or FALSE: It DOES matter what we teach and believe.
- True
 - False
25. Unity, **under God's authority**, is:
- Possible.
 - Required.
 - Demanded.
 - All of the above.

LESSON TWO

Let's Review The Basics of AUTHORITY!

In our two previous courses, **Jesus: Man of the Bible** and **Jesus: Lord of our Lives**, we established a foundation of God's authority in the Bible and we showed how without this foundation it will not be possible for any of us to come to a knowledge of the truth. We will now review these points so that they will be fresh in our minds.

Let us begin by returning to **2 Timothy 3:16-17**. Remember that most Bibles read something like, "**All SCRIPTURE⁹ is INSPIRED by GOD.**" We learned that the part where most English Bibles have the word "inspired" the original Greek language text literally says that all scripture is "**God-breathed**". The meaning of this word simply carries the idea that the Bible comes to us **from God** and **NOT from men**.



We learned that since the Bible is **FROM GOD, instead of coming from Man**, it is a **useful tool for us!** You will recall that there was a list of things given there, including for **teaching**, for **reproof** – which is a word that means showing someone what is wrong in their life or refuting errors people might teach – and for **correcting** – which means making something that is wrong to become correct again or helping people improve themselves- and for the **instruction/discipline in the way of justice¹⁰**. We also learned that all of these things are true **for a purpose**, "**So that the person who belongs to God might be completely ready, being completely equipped for any good work.**" Therefore, the Bible comes from God, it is useful for us, and that if we have it then we are completely equipped to serve God! Moreover, please do not forget that the only reason why the Bible accomplishes all of this in our lives is **because** it comes from God and not from man!

We found the same basic idea in **2 Peter 1:20-21**, where the writer stated that the message of the Bible, "written prophecy", never came about as the result of what the prophet wanted to say, but that God (through the Holy Spirit) guided the minds of the prophets and gave them the messages that he wanted them to speak and write. Therefore, when we read the written message from God today, we should not simply read it and tell or teach **what we think** it means. We must study it carefully until we can understand what God meant to say and then tell and teach that message to others. **We should never teach our opinions in place of God's true message!**

Understanding and applying these teachings ABOUT the Bible provide us with the foundation for UNITY in religion. IF the Bible is from God, IF it was given by God to teach, correct and train us, and IF it is complete, THEN the Bible will establish and maintain the unity Jesus prayed for! However, this will only happen IF everyone CLAIMING to belong to Christ STUDIES, UNDERSTANDS, and FOLLOWS what the Bible really says!

⁹ The Bible is not called "the Bible" in the verses found inside it. Instead, the original languages call it "scripture", which is a word that simply means "writings". The word "Bible" came to be used as a title for God's message many years after Christianity began.

¹⁰ Most Bibles contain the word "righteousness" in this place, but the original word found in the text is the word that the Greek people commonly used for our word "justice". So think of "justice" whenever you see the word "righteousness".

Warnings!

With the point of **2 Timothy 3:17** in mind, we also looked at a number of passages that gave warnings to the original Christians. The fact that these warnings exist in the text of the New Testament was proof that;

- 1) There were people **who were CLAIMING to be Christians and teaching things that were different** from the original teachings given by Jesus and his apostles;
- 2) Any person who taught **anything different from what Jesus and the apostles taught was WRONG**, and
- 3) Any Christian who **believed or even greeted these teachers would be considered partners with them!**

The conclusion we made was that what is taught and practiced in Christianity is very serious matter! The apostles were fighting to keep Christians unified around a fixed set of teachings, which came from God, and even people inside Christianity could become “false teachers”. As we try our best today to understand God’s will, we must remember that just because someone **CLAIMS** to be a Christian, and they do good works, it does not prove their genuineness anymore than a person who pretends to be a doctor and treats patients make him or her a doctor! Remember what Jesus told us in **Matthew 7:21-23! The determining factor that makes a person’s CLAIMS to be true or false is whether they are following and teaching “the will of my Father who is in the heavens.”** No person, organization, or group of churches has the authority to add to, take away from, or change any of the teachings God gave to us through Jesus and the apostles. **The UNITY Jesus prayed for can only be achieved by every person from every nation and time submitting himself or herself to that “will of my father who is in the heavens!”**

The WAY we study the Bible makes a difference!

If you recall back in our first lessons of **Jesus: Man of the Bible**, we discussed how **the WAY a person studies the Bible affects the kind of conclusions they will make**. Since our goal is to be objective and **UNDERSTAND** the message God intended for us to have, we need to remember the basic guidelines set down more by common sense than by anything else. Remember that the **PROCESS** of studying the Bible is just like studying anything else. The main difference between studying the Bible and studying Biology is that the textbook for our study of Biology was written by men but the Bible comes from God. With this in mind, and before we go further in our material for this course, let us briefly review the guidelines we suggested back at the beginning of your journey.¹¹

1. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE IS TO CHANGE OUR LIVES, NOT TO INCREASE OUR KNOWLEDGE.
2. THE BIBLE COMES FROM GOD.
3. GOD'S MESSAGE HAS ONLY ONE MEANING AND SHOULD NOT BE CHANGED.
4. WHEN WE STUDY THE BIBLE, WE MUST PUT ASIDE ALL RELIGIOUS IDEAS THAT WE WERE TAUGHT IN THE PAST.
5. **STUDY ALL AVAILABLE MATERIAL ON A SUBJECT BEFORE YOU MAKE ANY CONCLUSIONS.**
6. WE MUST CAREFULLY PUT EACH AND EVERY VERSE INTO ITS PROPER **CONTEXT**.
7. BIBLE STUDY IS A TWO-PHASE PROJECT. WE MUST FIRST SEEK TO OBTAIN THE ORIGINAL INTENDED MEANING. THEN WE CAN DETERMINE IF THAT MEANING APPLIES TO OUR TIME.
8. NO PASSAGE FROM THE BIBLE THAT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WILL CONTRADICT ONE THAT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND.
9. BIBLE EXAMPLES HELP TO CONFIRM OUR UNDERSTANDING AND CONCLUSIONS.
10. THE EXPLANATIONS WHICH GOD GIVES IN THE BIBLE SHOULD ALWAYS TAKE PRIORITY OVER OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, FEELINGS AND EXPECTATIONS.
11. EVERY INDIVIDUAL HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR HIMSELF/HERSELF.
12. A RELIGIOUS GROUP DOES NOT DETERMINE WHAT THE BIBLE DOES AND DOES NOT TEACH REGARDING A CERTAIN MATTER. IT IS THE BIBLE THAT DETERMINES WHAT A RELIGIOUS GROUP SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT TEACH!
13. USE BIBLE RESEARCH AND REFERENCE BOOKS TO HELP YOU FIND THE TRUTH.

¹¹ You can review the details of these guidelines in **Jesus: Man of the Bible, Lesson 3**.

Why should we be so careful?

The final point we want to review from those early lessons is perhaps the most important one of all. As we said before, Bible study is one of the most important endeavors we will ever perform and we cannot follow God unless we know what he wants us to do. We cannot know what he wants us to do unless we study. This is a simple truth that will NEVER change! By keeping these things in mind as you study, you will find that you **can** understand the Bible and make conclusions based upon facts. However, never forget that **YOU are responsible to answer to God for what YOU believe!** This fact should not only make us cautious when we study the Bible, but should also make us even more cautious when we listen to what so called “teachers” tell us we should do or not do! (This warning also includes listening to and blindly accepting this or any course we offer at the Bible Study Center!) Remember that God’s goal is not fully accomplished in your life until you obey what HE has told you to do!

Why should we be so careful about how we study the Bible? Why should we be complete in our research and careful in putting all passages into their proper context? Why can we not simply let our feelings be our guide or simply choose to listen to our religious leaders and do what they tell us? **Why can’t I just do WHAT I THINK is right?**

Please do not forget those basic things we learned back in the beginning. We discovered that the issue here is not about whether man is smart enough to decide things for himself. We learned that not only is man capable of deciding things for himself, but that **he is ACCOUNTABLE for each and every decision he makes!** The problem is not one of capability of processing information and making conclusions. The problem is one of perspective! We do not see things as they really are. God sees things as they really are and he tells us what we should do to survive!

If you will recall, we found a whole list of passages that spoke about the fact that man cannot guide himself BECAUSE HE IS NOT GOD! Man does not know **HOW** God thinks (**Isaiah 55:6-9**), man does not know **WHAT** God is thinking (**1 Corinthians 2:11-12**), and because of this man does not know **HOW to guide himself** in the ways of God (**Jeremiah 10:23**). It is, therefore, **VERY DANGEROUS** for a person to trust their own decisions (**Proverbs 14:12**). This is the reason why one of the most important passages in the Bible for us to memorize and keep close in our hearts is **Proverbs 3:3-8**, which tells us that the only way to **KNOW (UNDERSTAND)** what God wants is to listen to and trust him instead of trusting in ourselves! This is what Bible study is all about and we hope and pray that you will remember this, that you will remain committed to the idea of studying to find the will of God for you, and that you will continue to have the courage to follow whatever God’s will might tell you to do, regardless of the consequences! Never forget that it is not enough for someone to **SAY** that they believe in God. If the claim of faith is not supported by the action of obedience, then there is no truth in the claim! This is why Bible study alone is not sufficient. **Bible study helps us to know God’s will. Obedience to that will makes us his possession!**

This brings to a close our introduction of the course topic and review of the principles from past studies that will be important during our journey through this new material.

Before proceeding, please answer the test questions for Lesson 2:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lesson. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to use the answer sheet blanks numbered 26-50 for recording your answers.

26. What do we learn from **2 Timothy 3:16-17**?
- a) All scripture comes from God
 - b) All Bible translators are inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - c) Men can change God’s message
 - d) None of the above

27. According to **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, what is the scripture useful for?
- a) Teaching
 - b) Reproof
 - c) Correction
 - d) All of the above

28. TRUE or FALSE: We should never teach our own opinions in the place of God’s message
- a) True
 - b) False

29. The word “**righteousness**” means:
- a) Innocence
 - b) Purity
 - c) Justice
 - d) Being blameless

30. TRUE or FALSE: The Bible contains **ALL the teachings** of REAL Christianity.
- True
 - False
31. The Bible will **establish UNITY** if:
- it comes from God
 - it was given by God to train and teach us
 - it is complete
 - All of the above
32. What can we learn from the warning in **2 Timothy 3:17**?
- There were never false teachers in the New Testament times.
 - God was ok with people teaching different teachings than the originals.
 - People could believe and teach whatever they wanted.
 - There were problems with false teachers and the Christians were told not to have anything to do with them.
33. TRUE or FALSE: What is taught and practiced in a religious group is **not important**.
- True
 - False
34. According to **Matthew 7:21-23**, what is the most important thing?
- Being able to do miracles
 - Memorizing Bible verses.
 - Doing the will of the Father.
 - Feeling close to God.
35. We must submit ourselves to and follow:
- Our religious leaders.
 - God's will.
 - Our own wishes and desires.
 - Whatever our friends tell us.
36. The way we study the Bible:
- is a process.
 - affects the conclusions we make.
 - makes a difference.
 - all of the above.
37. TRUE or FALSE: Studying the Bible is like studying any other book.
- True
 - False
38. How many **Guidelines for Bible Study** did we learn in *Jesus: Man of the Bible* lesson 3?
- 10
 - 13
 - 17
 - 8
39. When we talk about considering the verses before and after a passage we are talking about:
- Context
 - Content
 - Insects
 - Complex
40. If a topic has **10 verses** which speak about it in the Bible, how many should we study?
- 9 of them
 - 5 of them
 - All 10 of them
 - None of them
41. TRUE or FALSE: We can trust our "Religious experiences", even if they do not agree with what the Bible teaches.
- True
 - False
42. What is the **most obvious reason** we should study the Bible?
- To get smarter.
 - Because that's where we learn God's will.
 - So that we can make money.
 - None of the above.
43. **Who** will have to answer to God for what you believe?
- Your pastor.
 - Your parents.
 - Your friends.
 - You.
44. TRUE or FALSE: We should accept whatever our religious leaders tell us without ever questioning them.
- True
 - False
45. What do we learn from 1 Corinthians 10:13?
- We always have a choice when temptations come.
 - God will not let us be tempted beyond our capabilities.
 - We always have a way out of temptations so we don't have to sin.
 - All of the above.

46. Which verse tells us that **we do not know HOW** God thinks?

- a) Isaiah 55:6-9
- b) 1 Corinthians 2:11-12
- c) Jeremiah 10:23
- d) Proverbs 14:12

47. Which verse tells us **we don't know WHAT** God is thinking?

- a) Isaiah 55:6-9
- b) 1 Corinthians 2:11-12
- c) Jeremiah 10:23
- d) Proverbs 14:12

48. Which verse tells us that Man **does not know** how to guide himself?

- a) Isaiah 55:6-9
- b) 1 Corinthians 2:11-12
- c) Jeremiah 10:23
- d) Proverbs 14:12

49. Which verse tells us that if Man leads himself he will be lead unto death?

- a) Isaiah 55:6-9
- b) 1 Corinthians 2:11-12
- c) Jeremiah 10:23
- d) Proverbs 14:12

50. Studying the Bible is not enough. What must we also do?

- a) Receive guidance from the Holy Spirit.
- b) Choose what we like and follow it.
- c) Do all that God tells us to do.
- d) None of the above.

LESSON THREE

Searching for BIBLICAL Christianity.

Any study of the Bible's idea of Christianity centers around a correct understanding of the meaning and purpose of "the church" we have mentioned in past lessons. As we have pointed out many times, the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language and sometimes it is helpful for us to search the original language for clues which can help us gain a better understanding of what God wants us to do today. The Greek word in the pages of our New Testaments for the word "church" is **ἐκκλησία (EKKLESIA)** and represents the idea of "**a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place for a common purpose**". In the New Testament times, these gatherings were often referred to as 'assemblies' and it is very important to understand that these were not always gatherings of people for **religious purposes**. Yes, believe it or not this is true! In fact we have an example in the New Testament, **Acts 19:24-41**, where the Greek word for "church" is found and **it IS NOT referring to a "religious" assembly** at all, but to a nonreligious public gathering. However, the Bible **DOES** use the word "church", or "assembly" to represent God's people in three basic ways;

1. A public gathering (assembly) of Christians (**1 Corinthians 14:19-35**)
2. A group of Christians living in a certain town (**2 Thessalonians 1:1**)
3. The whole body of Christians worldwide.¹² (**Ephesians 1:22**)

According to the third usage of the word church, we could say that the church is composed of saved people all over the world united into one body by Christ's blood. Therefore, if a person has been saved then he/she is also a member of the church, and if one is a member of the church then he/she has also been saved! This is how the Bible explains it and so we cannot separate one idea from the other.

This is very much different from the idea mentioned back in our first lesson because very often today people teach that being a Christian and "being a member of the church" are separate from each other. Religion today would allow churches to have different teachings and concentrate, instead, only upon having a "unity of purpose" – which is a surface unity that would hide a reality of many underlying disputes and division.

¹²This is the **UNIVERSAL** sense which designates those people who have been 'CALLED OUT' of the world of sin into God's saved "group of believers".

Christianity in the Bible focuses upon unity at all levels and is based upon the idea of **ONE** that we found revealed in Ephesians chapter 4, "There is **ONE** body (church) and **ONE** Spirit. And God called you to have **ONE** hope. There is **ONE** Lord, **ONE** faith, **ONE** baptism. There is **ONE** God and Father of everything." (Ephesians 4:4-5) **God gives us unity when we submit to his rule and authority.**

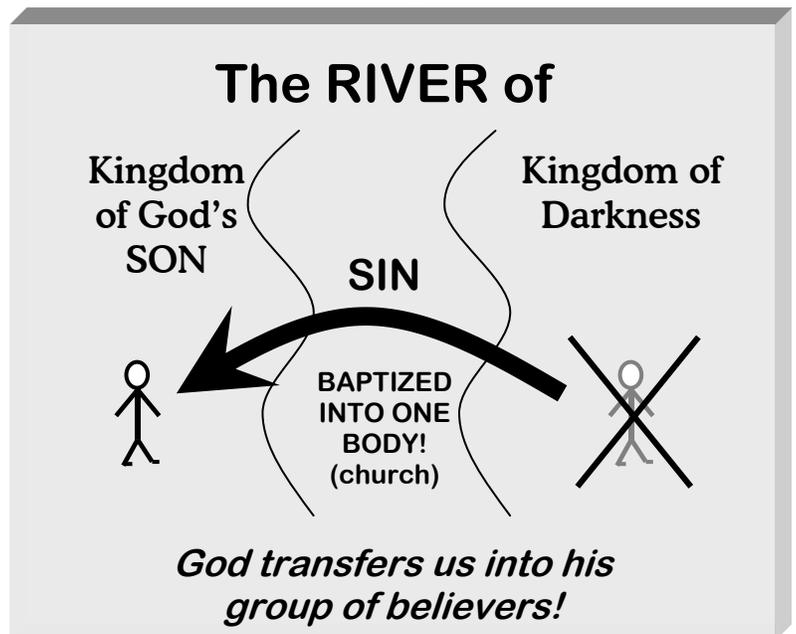
Therefore, the only way for there to be unity in religion today is for ALL PEOPLE to accept God's authority and change their teachings and practices to agree with HIS teachings that are found in the Bible. This is what Jesus had in mind when he prayed his UNITY prayer in John 17!

Can a person be 'SAVED' and not be IN God's church?

This is a question which is often asked today. Before answering it we should notice that during the New Testament time no teacher ever placed an emphasis upon inviting people to become "church members" but, rather, on inviting people to receive the free gift of salvation from sin! Let us look at what happened on the Day of Pentecost when Christianity as we know it today began! (Please stop and read: **Acts 2:14-38**) On that day Peter did not inform the people about what to do to "get into the church", but rather "what to do **to be saved** from their sins"! It is a fact, however, that when they were saved the Bible explains to us that they were also "added" to the church. We can see this by looking at the verses which follow Peter's speech in Acts 2. (See: **Acts 2:39-47**) Verse 47 literally says, "and the Lord added to the group day by day those that were being saved". But this was not something that was mentioned in any speech given about salvation. **It was simply a fact that receiving salvation meant that a person was automatically placed inside God's group of people (his church) by God himself.** Today, much emphasis is placed on "which church you belong to" instead of on salvation from sins. Back during the time of original Christianity people simply asked, "Are you saved?" If the answer was, "Yes!", then it was **UNDERSTOOD** that the person was already a member of the Lord's **ONE** church because **EVERYONE** who received Jesus **WAS ADDED BY GOD to his ONE church!**

Many people today do not even like the idea of "church" because they see so much "un-Christian" behavior in churches. Others find that all some churches seem to emphasize is "the church" to the point that it becomes "**Church**ianity" instead of **Christ**ianity! **Does this mean that the idea of "the church" is itself wrong?** Why should we think so? Isn't it possible that the problems we see in "the church" today result from people adding, changing, and/or taking away from the original idea that God delivered through Jesus and his apostles? Perhaps we should first investigate what God says in the Bible about "the church" and "religion" before we conclude that the ideas themselves are wrong. If God tells us that we cannot please him unless we live as a member of his "one body" (church) then we should think very carefully before we conclude that the church is not important.

Remember that being saved from sin **AND** being added to God's church happen at the same time (at baptism) and **GOD** does them both! **He SAVES us through the blood of his SON and he ADDS us to his church!**¹³ Since this is true then we must conclude that no person can be saved without being part of the "group of believers" which belongs to the Lord. You cannot have a personal relationship with Jesus without also becoming a part of **HIS** church and you cannot become part of his church without first being saved! Do not forget that both of these things happen at the same time!



¹³ See 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.

What are members of the Lord's church called?

The current religious system has produced almost as many names as it has groups. To some people, this is not important since they ask, "**What is important about a name anyway?**" Actually, we all believe that names are very important. Mr. Cruz would not like other people referring to his wife as Mrs. Tan, right? Please stop and read **Ephesians 5:23-32**. Here we see that the church described as the "**wife**" of Christ and while there is not one particular **official** name for the church found in the Bible¹⁴ any name we choose ought to give glory and honor to the Lord.

The word "Christian" means that **we BELONG to Christ**. This is why we read, in **1 Peter 4:16**, "*But if you suffer because you are a CHRISTIAN, then don't be ashamed. You should praise (thank) God for that name (Christian).*" Of course, it would also be correct to speak of God's children as "disciples", "saints", "believers", etc., but whenever glory is given it must be given to God and not to man.

One problem we see in our religious world today is that **the names that groups use are CONFUSING**. Some of these names are drawn from the names of religious leaders, some from a particular type of church organization, and still others come from unique church teachings. Often people cling to these names so tightly that they become closed to the idea of examining the Bible independently of the teachers and teachings associated with that particular name. To make matters more confusing, **individual groups often form alliances** with other groups with similar teachings and they give these partnerships names like "evangelicals", "fundamentalists", "charismatics", to name a few. All of this confusion would be eliminated if people would simply give up the names, organizations, and strange teachings and then return to the original idea of Christianity we find in the Bible because this would produce the **ONE BODY** of united believers God wants to have.

We can be "Christians ONLY"!

The believers in the 1st Century were "Christians only". To do this today all we need to do is **follow the SAME Christianity** which the first disciples practiced. In the New Testament we learn all about this Christianity and the church that served as the foundation for its growth and action. If, today, we take this church as our guide then **WE WILL BECOME CHRISTIANS ONLY!** By separating ourselves from the confusing religious system we live in it is just as possible for us to be "Christians only" today as it was for the people in the 1st Century. **You CAN become a Christian without joining a denomination!** However, unity of the faith cannot be accomplished without every person submitting to that form of original Christianity delivered by God to his people and recorded in the New Testament. **We do not need a NEW SOLUTION** to have peace of mind in our religious life. What we need is a return to the same old solution given by God some 2,000 years ago!

"Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. Whoever says, "I have come to know him", but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked." - 1 John 2:3-6

Before proceeding, please answer the test questions for Lesson 3:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to use the answer sheet blanks numbered 51-75 for recording your answers.

51. The New Testament was **originally** written in:

- a) Greek
- b) Aramaic
- c) Latin
- d) Hebrew

52. TRUE or FALSE: The Greek word for "**church**" is EKKLESIA.

- a) True
- b) False

¹⁴ Perhaps the closest thing to an official name would be "The Way" – **Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:14,22**. To be fair to the text of the New Testament, phrases like "church of God" and "church of Christ" are, in their contexts, being used as descriptive phrases and not as proper names for the church.

53. The word “**EKKLESIA**” means:
- a church building to worship in.
 - a group of people called out of their homes for a purpose.
 - All of the above.
 - None of the above.
54. TRUE or FALSE: “EKKLESIA” was always used in a **religious sense**.
- True
 - False
55. The word “EKKLESIA” is used to describe:
- A public gathering (assembly) of Christians
 - A group of Christians living in a certain town
 - The whole body of Christians worldwide
 - All of the above
56. According to **Ephesians 4:4-5**, what will happen if we all submit to the authority of God?
- There will always be different denominations
 - No one will agree
 - There will be unity
 - None of the above
57. TRUE or FALSE: **ALL PEOPLE** must accept and submit to God’s authority.
- True
 - False
58. Where can we read Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost?
- Acts 17:22-34
 - Acts 6:8-15
 - Acts 10:17-23
 - Acts 2:14-38
59. In that sermon, what did Peter say would happen to the people if they followed his instructions?
- They could get in “The Church”.
 - They would receive forgiveness for their sins.
 - They would become angels.
 - All of the above.
60. TRUE or FALSE: when a person receives salvation **GOD** adds them to **HIS** church.
- True
 - False
61. In the New Testament times, whenever a person said they were **SAVED**:
- It was understood that they were a Christian
 - They were a member of the Lord’s ONE church
 - God had added them to his ONE church
 - All of the above
62. The problems we see in the church today are caused by:
- People changing the teachings of Jesus and the apostles
 - People studying and following the Bible
 - People being careful to choose NOT to sin
 - None of the above
63. TRUE or FALSE: Being saved from sin and being added to the Lord’s church happen at the same time.
- True
 - False
64. How do we GET INTO the church?
- God puts us there.
 - We do enough good works to deserve it.
 - We pray to Mary and she puts us there.
 - We place membership there.
65. **Ephesians 5:23-32** refers to the church as:
- the sister of Christ
 - the mother of Christ
 - the wife of Christ
 - All of the above
66. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus gives a name for HIS church in the Bible.
- True
 - False
67. TRUE or FALSE: You must join a church with **THE RIGHT NAME**.
- True
 - False
68. TRUE or FALSE: A **CHRISTIAN** is someone who belongs to Christ.
- True
 - False
69. Which passage refers to believers as “Christians”?
- 1 John 2:3-6
 - Acts 2:41-47
 - 1 Corinthians 14:19-35
 - 1 Peter 4:16
70. God’s children are referred to as “Christians” in the Bible. What other words are used to refer to them?
- Disciples
 - Believers
 - Saints
 - All of the above

71. TRUE or FALSE: Giving up all the names, organizations and strange teachings in religion would produce a single unified body of believers.

- a) True
- b) False

72. TRUE or FALSE: The believers in the 1st Century were “Christians only”.

- a) True
- b) False

73. If we use the Christians in the 1st century as a guide and follow their example,

- a) we can also become “Christians only”
- b) we will have religious unity
- c) we will be fulfilling Jesus’ prayer in John 17
- d) All of the above

74. In order to have peace of mind in religion,

- a) we need to return to the original Christianity in the New Testament
- b) we need to find new solutions
- c) we need to pay attention to our religious leaders
- d) None of the above

75. TRUE or FALSE: We already have the solution to the problems in religion today: **Follow God’s teachings.**

- a) True
- b) False

LESSON FOUR

Why are there MORE THAN 38,000 “churches” today?

At this point in our study it should be pretty obvious that there is a problem in “religion” today, and that it is a very great one. After all, how is it possible that so many people can be so excited about all the different **kinds** of “Christians” while the evidence from the New Testament **clearly** shows that Jesus and his Apostles would never accept the idea of such a picture! The Bible message is very clear: **Jesus came and established HIS church (singular), not HIS churches!**¹⁵ The Bible message also shows clearly that **HIS** original church followed **HIS** teachings, and the warnings of the first leaders of **HIS** church clearly stated that anyone who claimed to be a “Christian” during that time and who **did NOT live by those teachings**, no matter how sincere or “spiritual” they or others might have thought them to be, **did not have God!**¹⁶ Anyone today who **claims** to be a “Christian” must be very careful when they become excited at seeing so many churches all claiming Christ as their Lord and giving him praise and glory!

It is important to maintain a proper perspective on things we see happening around us today and no one better emphasizes this perspective than the Lord Jesus himself, in **Matthew 7:21-23!** **PLEASE** do not forget to notice the end result of the lives of those “good”, “active”, and “spiritual” characters in his story. Jesus told them to go away from him and **HE** called them “lawless” people! Do not forget that the people Jesus “condemned” would have considered themselves to be sincere, dedicated, and saved people. It does not matter what we think, but only what Jesus thinks that really matters in the end! We cannot trust our feelings or desires when it comes to determining what is true and false, genuine and fake! As we learned in our previous studies, the teachings Jesus received from his Father and gave to all mankind will be our judge on the last day!¹⁷

Jesus was born into a religious world that was very corrupt. What started out as the pure word of God with Moses at Mount Sinai became altered and replaced by the teachings and traditions of men down through the years. The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ time were so convinced that they had the “correct religion” that they rejected Jesus and accused him of being a false teacher because his teachings did not agree with theirs. The thing we need to remember is that **THESE LEADERS TRULY BELIEVED THEY WERE CORRECT** when they opposed Jesus! However, we know that they were wrong. Jesus was in fact their Lord and Master and so **WHY** did they not follow him? In **Mark 7:6-9**, we see the answer. Although the Jewish leaders **CLAIMED** to know and follow God, Jesus said their devotion was **USELESS** because their faith was based upon the teachings that came from men. Over the years (going back generations) the leaders of Israel slowly replaced many of God’s original teachings with their

¹⁵ Remember that **Ephesians 4:1-6** shows clearly that during the time of the apostle Paul, it was his understanding that there was only one “body” – which context teaches us was his common way of referring to the “church”.

¹⁶ Remember what we learned from **2 John 1:9-11?**

¹⁷ Remember what we learned in **John 12:47-50?**

own ideas and the people became misguided and deceived because they trusted and followed their leaders instead of relying upon God's word! This is the reason why God ultimately turned his back upon the Jewish nation and why non-Jewish people today have the possibility to become part of the New Agreement! It was these same religious leaders who brought false charges against Jesus and pressured the Roman government authorities to execute him!

We know that even though they falsified charges and had Jesus murdered, God used these people in HIS plan to being Jesus' church into existence! We have seen how that church began and grew rapidly in number and in reputation as being a **family** of God.¹⁸

However, the spirit of unity and brotherhood of these early Christians did not continue as time passed and Christianity spread beyond Jerusalem into the surrounding countryside and later out into the other parts of the Roman world. In the books of the New Testament more commonly known as "epistles", we see numerous references attitude problems among the Christians in different places. The greatest problem we encounter is **DISUNITY!** One of the best examples of this problem can be seen in the Corinthian Christians. In 1 Corinthians chapters 1-4 we see that these people were not united, that they were divided into what could be described as "political parties", each with its own favorite teacher, and that they were thinking in a worldly way and NOT in the way of God! Chapters 5-7 deal with problems in the area of sexual morality, in which we see these people doing very bad things, and not feeling the slightest guilt about them! In chapter 8-10 we find that these people believed that they had the freedom to do whatever they wanted, no matter what other Christians might think or say, and they were causing problems in the church by hurting and offending others by their selfish behavior. In chapters 11-14 we find that when these "brethren" came together in the assembly they were no better off because their selfishness and disregard for who they were (God's children) and what they were supposed to be doing (building up and encouraging one another "to love and good works") blinded them to the point that the Lord's Supper, arguably the most important tool God has given his children to keep them together and going in the right direction, became nothing more than a common meal in which the goal seemed to be self-gratification, just as in all the other areas the writer since the start of his letter!

Looking back to what was said in chapter 1, it is no wonder that they would look to one teacher over another as their "leader" and form political groupings that alienating others. Each subgroup became in essence a church unto itself and as such would be a "denomination" as sure as the denominations of today. They would not have considered their brethren to be outsiders, as is evidenced by the fact that they ALL still came together in the assembly, but they were in no way the unified body of believers that Jesus prayed for in **John 17:21!**

If we remove the immorality we find discussed in chapters 5-7, the situation in Corinth is similar to the differences found in **MANY of the 38,000 groups** of today and, just like the Corinthians, no one today seems concerned by the "differences" found in the beliefs and practices of these modern groups. However, before we conclude that the current religious situation is a good thing we must ask the question, "Did Paul think that the differences in Corinth were a good thing?" **1 Corinthians 4:14-21** reveals to us his reason for writing; to admonish them to stop listening to so many teachers and remember back to what they learned from him! Was he accepting of their individual opinions? What does he say in verse 21? What does he **REALLY** say? He hates what was happening to his children! What about God? Did GOD accept their behavior? In chapter 11, where the writer speaks about the Lord's Supper, he mentions that God had made some "weak" and "sick", and that God had even killed¹⁹ some of the people!

Their disunity was caused by selfishness and there can be no unity where selfishness exists!



PLEASE STOP HERE AND WORK THROUGH THE ASSIGNMENT WORKSHEET for **Lesson 4**. After completing your study of the list of passages then you may continue.

The problems at Corinth were not unique. The New Testament letters contain references to show that **FALSE TEACHING** was a common problem and the leading cause for it mentioned in the passages is **SELFISHNESS!** Each time there was false teaching in a certain place there seemed to be a person or group of people at the heart of the problem, teaching things that were different from what the people had received in the beginning. Several passages in our Worksheet stood out from the others. The passage **2 Timothy 3:1-8** was very informative because it showed clearly that selfishness was a motivator for false teaching. **2 Timothy 4:1-4** was particularly important for our study because it predicted that **in the future** people would even seek out teachers that would say things they

¹⁸ Please review what we learned about the Day of Pentecost, in **Acts chapters 2-4**, and how the church grew and helped people.

¹⁹ The phrase in the Greek text refers to people "falling asleep", which is a phrase often used to represent people dying!

want to hear. Because the passages represented so many places in the New Testament time they made it very clear that many people who began as Christians became false teachers and that many sincere Christians were deceived into believing things that were false because of them. We can easily see from the context of what the writers said in these passages that there should be no changes to the original teachings in Christ's church. Their warnings were very clear and easy to understand. Aside from their own condemnation of changes and false teachers, perhaps the most amazing passage in the list was **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12**, where we discovered that if people **do not want to believe and accept the truth** then God himself might cause those people to believe that what they want to hear is true even though it is really a lie! The final conclusion must be that REAL Christianity remains faithful to the original message and teachings!

GNOSTICISM: The first major “denomination”?

Near the close of the 1st Century, a way of teaching arose that caused great damage to the New Testament church in the 2nd Century. Because it became so widespread it is commonly referred to as a “movement” by religious historians. **Gnosticism** – from the Greek word **GNOSIS**, which means “knowledge”, was a system of belief that combined basic Christian teachings with cultural, philosophical, and mystical beliefs of the people resulting in a set of beliefs that appeared to be Christian on the surface but contained several main teachings that were very far away from the truth. It came about when people who became Christians brought in teachings from their past beliefs and ADDED them into the teachings of Christianity. They justified these teachings by claiming to have “special knowledge” that ordinary Christians did not have. As time passed their influence grew to the point that they caused many to lose their way. The Gnostics had their leaders, prophets, and writers. Perhaps the two most destructive errors of Gnosticism were 1) their teaching that Jesus was not a real person, that he did not live as a human and die a literal death on the cross, and 2) their teaching that a Christian is a spiritual being living in the spiritual realm of God, and therefore is no longer accountable for the actions of their body, which is still in the fleshly world. They taught that sin is committed by the flesh and is separate from the soul and so a Christian could do something sinful and God would not hold him or her accountable for it.

The issue that concerns our study is the claim the Gnostic teachers had of being given “special knowledge” that the ordinary people did not have. The Apostle John fought against the early beginnings of Gnosticism. In his book, 1 John, we learn that the teachings about Jesus not coming in the flesh were already being taught while he, an apostle of Christ and an eyewitness to his life, teachings, death, resurrection and ascension was still alive! John refers repeatedly to someone he calls. “the Antichrist”, who he says is someone who denies that Jesus came in the flesh. In **1 John 2:18-24** we learn that the Antichrist is not one individual person, and it is not Satan, or some devilish beast. John points out that there were **MANY** “antichrists” and from the context of what he says in verse 19 we can conclude that an “antichrist” is a person who was once a Christian but who betrayed their faith and taught that Jesus was not a real person. If we continue reading we can easily see that John was opposed to these teachers and warned the people not to be influenced by them. In verse 20, he points out to the people that they all have “special knowledge” from God, through the Holy Spirit who was given to each of them as a guide. He said that they all **KNOW all things**. In verses 24-25 he warns them to remain faithful “to the things they heard in the beginning” of their faith and not be deceived by these new ideas!

There were false teachers and false teachings during the time of original Christianity and many sincere Christians were deceived and lead astray by them. These teachers denied the Christ who bought them and even challenged the authority of the Apostles! This situation caused John to write that famous warning, **2 John 1:9-11**, that we have looked at many times since we began our first studies in Jesus: Man of the Bible, *“Anyone running ahead and not remaining in the teachings of the Christ does not have God; the one remaining in the teaching, this one has both the Father and the son. If a certain person comes and he does not bring this teaching do not receive him into your house and do not say to him ‘Greetings!’, because the one saying to him, ‘Greetings!’, shares in his evil works.”*

The conclusion is very clear. There were people changing the original teachings during the time of original Christianity, and changing the teachings of Christ was a BAD thing.

The New Testament writers who spoke on the matter taught that anyone who changes, adds, or takes away from the original teachings was wrong and anyone who follows the changed teachings of a false teacher for any reason was wrong!

Can Christianity today be any **DIFFERENT**?

Something is definitely wrong with our world today. Jesus prayed that his disciples **would be ONE, not 38,000!**

Differences in religious teachings between “Christian” groups are tolerated and people rejoice that there are so many who CLAIM Christ as Lord and Savior! The religious world says, “Find yourself a church that teaches what you want to believe and join it!” If anyone suggests that the 38,000 group “church” is unacceptable to God and that people who claim to know Christ need to get back to the basics of what was taught in the time of the first Christians people will accuse that person of being a “legalist” and dismiss them as being irrelevant.

If you are confused about the situation then there is one safe way to resolve the issue. Forget about what men say on the matter and concentrate on what the Lord himself said in **Matthew 7:21-23**. If we do not serve him **doing the things HIS FATHER SAID TO DO** then our service is useless! There is only one Father and he has only one will! We learned in previous lessons that Jesus will judge the world on the Last Day and he will do it by the teachings he received from his Father!²⁰ Those teachings are that will Jesus spoke of in Matthew 7 and any person or group of people who claim to know God and do not do exactly what HE said, are liars! If God says that he has one church and men say that God has 38,000 then **someone has to be lying!**

Before proceeding, please answer the test questions for Lesson 4:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to use the answer sheet blanks numbered 76-100 for recording your answers.

76. TRUE or FALSE: In the time of Jesus and the Apostles there was no such thing as “**different kinds**” of Christians.
- a) True
 - b) False
77. Which of the following statements about the time of Jesus is **NOT** true?
- a) Jesus established ONE church.
 - b) All “Christians” follow Jesus’ teachings.
 - c) Everyone was ok as long as they were “spiritual”.
 - d) If they did not follow Jesus’ teachings they did NOT have God.
78. TRUE or FALSE: God **is pleased** with the 38,000 groups existing today.
- a) True
 - b) False
79. What do we learn from **Matthew 7:21-23**?
- a) To follow the will of God is the most important thing we need to do.
 - b) Jesus will accept us as long as we do miracles.
 - c) It doesn’t matter how we live as long as we are “good” people.
 - d) None of the above.
80. What did we read in **John 12:47-50**?
- a) The father will judge us on the last day.
 - b) No one is going to Hell.
 - c) We will be judged by Jesus’ teachings on the last day.
 - d) All of the above.
81. TRUE or FALSE: The religious leaders in Jesus’ time rejected him because they thought they were right.
- a) True
 - b) False
82. Why was Jesus scolding the religious leaders in **Mark 7:6-9**?
- a) They were teaching traditions of men.
 - b) They let go of the teachings of God.
 - c) They honored God only with their words.
 - d) All of the above.
83. TRUE or FALSE: During the time of the New Testament Christians, the Church was **a family**.
- a) True
 - b) False
84. The MAIN problem the Corinthians had was:
- a) Disbelief
 - b) Disunity.
 - c) Unhappiness.
 - d) Disobedience.
85. What was the problem mentioned in **1 Corinthians 1:10-17**?
- a) There were people claiming to be “of” certain teachers.
 - b) The teachers were trying to pervert the gospel.
 - c) They were teaching “a different Christ”.
 - d) The false teachers were focused on worldly things.

²⁰ Read carefully **John 12:44-50!**

86. What was the problem mentioned in **2 Corinthians 11:1-6**?

- a) There were people claiming to be “of” certain teachers.
- b) The teachers were trying to pervert the gospel.
- c) They were teaching “a different Christ”.
- d) The false teachers were focused on worldly things.

87. What was the problem mentioned in **Galatians 1:6-9**?

- a) There were people claiming to be “of” certain teachers.
- b) The teachers were trying to pervert the gospel.
- c) They were teaching “a different Christ”.
- d) The false teachers were focused on worldly things.

88. What was the problem mentioned in **Philippians 3:17-21**?

- a) There were people claiming to be “of” certain teachers.
- b) The teachers were trying to pervert the gospel.
- c) They were teaching “a different Christ”.
- d) The false teachers were focused on worldly things.

89. True or FALSE: **Colossians 2:16-23** mentions the names of the false teachers Paul was talking about?

- a) True.
- b) False

90. Who was the false teacher mentioned in **2 Thessalonians 2:9-15**?

- a) Satan.
- b) Someone who acts by the power of Satan.
- c) Judas.
- d) None of the above.

91. What was the problem mentioned in **1 Timothy 1:3-11**?

- a) Some people were teaching false things because they wanted to be teachers of the law.
- b) People were arguing over genealogies and myths.
- c) People were becoming selfish and learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth.
- d) People were listening to those who said what their itching ears wanted to hear.

92. What was the problem mentioned in **2 Timothy 2:14-19**?

- a) Some people were teaching that the resurrection was past.
- b) People were arguing over genealogies and myths.
- c) People were becoming selfish and learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth.
- d) People were listening to those who said what their itching ears wanted to hear.

93. What was the problem mentioned in **2 Timothy 3:1-8**?

- a) Some people were teaching false things because they wanted to be teachers of the law.
- b) People were arguing over genealogies and myths.
- c) People were becoming selfish and learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth.
- d) People were listening to those who said what their itching ears wanted to hear.

94. What was the problem mentioned in **2 Timothy 4:1-4**?

- a) Some people were teaching false things because they wanted to be teachers of the law.
- b) People were arguing over genealogies and myths.
- c) People were becoming selfish and learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth.
- d) People were listening to those who said what their itching ears wanted to hear.

95. The **most** common motivation mentioned in the verses of the worksheet was:

- a) Power.
- b) Fear.
- c) Persecution.
- d) Selfishness.

96. The word Gnosticism comes from the Greek word “**GNOSIS**” which means:

- a) Justice
- b) Knowledge
- c) Law.
- d) Teaching

97. Which of the following is not a teaching of Gnosticism?

- a) Jesus did not become a human.
- b) Jesus did not die a literal death.
- c) A Christian is not accountable for the sins which they commit in their body.
- d) A human is capable of being sinless.

98. TRUE or FALSE: There can be only one Antichrist.

- a) True.
- b) False.

99. According to **2 John 1:9-11**, if someone comes to your house and does not bring the teaching of Christ you should:

- a) Accept him and listen to what he says.
- b) Not welcome/greet him.
- c) Wish him God-speed.
- d) None of the above.

100. The reason why we must be careful to follow "the teachings of Christ" is:

- a) Because they are the "will of the father" and will be used to judge us on the last day.
- b) Because they come from God and not man.
- c) Because we can only have unity if all people follow them.
- d) All of the above.

Good Work!

You have now completed the last set of test questions for Book 1. Please return the answer sheet back to our office for grading. Once we have completed the grading process we will return the answer sheet to you along with Book 2 of the course, containing Lessons 5-8.

If you have any questions you would like to ask please use space on the back side of the answer sheet for this purpose. Thank you for your interest in God's word!

Also, if you have friends or relatives, 16 years old or older, who would like to study with us, send us their names and complete mailing addresses and we will be happy to get them started. Remember that they will need to begin with the course Jesus: Man of the Bible. We will be very happy to send them that course material.

Thank you for your interest and for your time in studying God's word!

Bible Study Center

Worksheet for Lesson 4

This handout provides you with a list of verses that speak about the **EXISTENCE OF FALSE TEACHERS** in the time of the early New Testament church. Please put the verse into context and use the space on the worksheet to record a summary of your findings. After you finish your own research then return to page 15 of the lesson material and continue.

Reference	Does it mention WHO the false teachers were?	Does it mention WHAT they were teaching?	Does it mention WHY they were doing this?
1 Corinthians 1:10-17			
2 Corinthians 11:1-6			
Galatians 1:6-9			
Philippians 3:17-21			
Colossians 2:16-23			
2 Thessalonians 2:9-15			

1 Timothy 1:3-11			
2 Timothy 2:14-19			
2 Timothy 3:1-8			
2 Timothy 4:1-4			
Titus 1:10-16			
2 Peter 2:1-22			
2 John 1:7-11			
3 John 1:9-10			
Jude 1:3-23			