

Free! Take one!

# That They all May Be One

John 17:21



Chapter one

Our common desire

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## Chapter One

# Our Common Desire

We all want to go to heaven. Whether you are involved in one of the world's religions, or one of the many denominations, or have no religious practice at all, you still hope for a better place of some sort when this life is over. This is our common desire, but there is a problem. In religion there are many conflicting ideas and beliefs. One preacher says that you have to be baptized and another says that you don't. One preacher says



that women can be preachers and another says that they can't. One preacher says that homosexuality is a sin and another says that it isn't. These differences are confusing and frustrating. This is why many people give up on religion. They want to go to heaven, but it's just too confusing. And so, they walk away never finding the salvation that they and their loved ones need.

Tragically, Satan wins again.

## Not Everyone Who Says To Me "Lord, Lord"

Satan is extremely clever at using confusion to deceive and overcome people. The Bible tells us that even religious people can be deceived. In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus warned, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

We all understand that rebellious sinners are lost, but Jesus is telling us that many religious people are lost, too. They live their lives thinking that they are going to heaven, but they aren't. It's not enough that they

are sincere and want eternal life. They must actually follow the word of God. Sadly, many will learn too late that they have been deceived by Satan's strategy of confusion.

God does not want one single soul to perish (II Peter 3:9), and neither do we. Our goal is to be certain that we are on the strait and narrow way. We don't want to be victims of Satan's deceptive strategy.

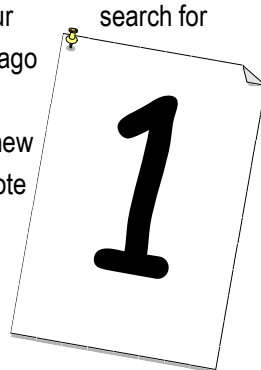
## 2000 Years Ago

How can we make this security a reality?

How can we stand together and fight the confusion that Satan has created?

How can we bring people of various religious backgrounds together to form a common family that supports and upholds one another?

These are exciting questions. Fortunately, we live in a time when answers can be freely searched out. Lets begin our search for answers back at the beginning, nearly 2000 years ago when Jesus said, *"I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). Jesus succeeded and later when Paul wrote the letter to the Romans he said, *"The churches of Christ greet you"* (Rom. 16:16). For a time there was just one church with no frustrating divisions. Christians walked together in unity with their friends and loved ones.



## Division Foretold

Satan would not sit idly by and let that early unity go unchallenged. He quickly implemented the age old divide and conquer strategy and has used it with chilling success ever since. Paul warned people about

Satan's evil plan. Paul said, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desire, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (II Timothy 4:3,4). Unfortunately, divisions occurred just as Paul warned. Some of the division started from honest disagreements that Satan took advantage of by stirring up man's pride. Some of the division was the result of evil teachers, Satan's henchmen, who were making money by preaching just whatever people wanted to hear. Division also came about because some people were not satisfied being just Christians. They wanted something more than God's simple New Testament pattern. They wanted to customize Christianity. They wanted it to reflect their own ideas and creativity. Satan's henchmen were more than willing to help these people redesign Christianity—for a hefty profit, of course.

The many changes that men have made over the years have deprived us of the greater joy and power that is available in Christ. These changes strain friendships, tarnish family ties, and even destroy some relationships. Most of the division that hinders us today springs directly from these man-made changes. Denominational division is a monument to Satan's success.

## Satan's Buffet

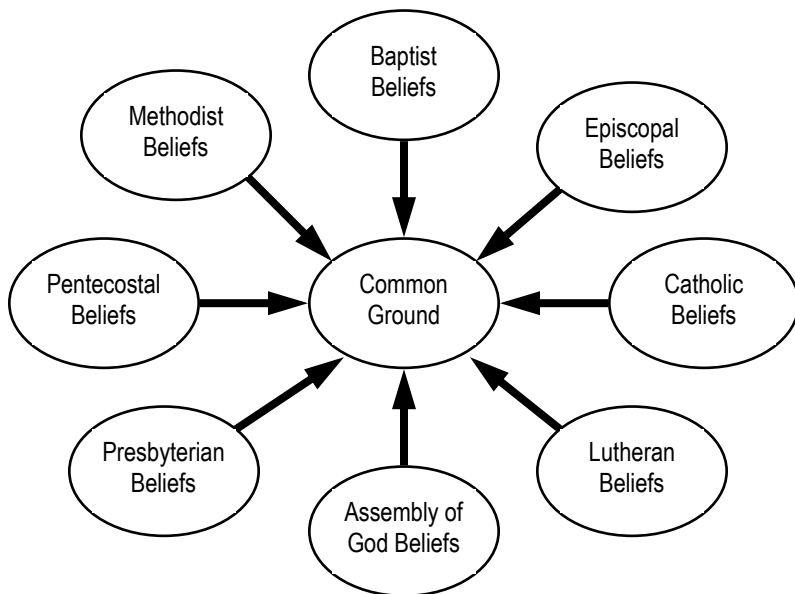
It is easy to see that denominational division is not from God nor pleasing to God. Think about it this way, if one preacher approved of all the doctrines of all the denominations all at the same time and always taught just whatever people wanted to hear, we would not think kindly of that preacher. We would say that he lacked conviction and that he was wishy-washy. We would be angry with such a preacher for not taking a consistent stand. We might even call him a liar and a hypocrite. Yet, many people think that God is just like that preacher. They think that God approves of all the conflicting doctrines and that God lets you

believe just whatever doctrine you want. To them, the denominations are like a long buffet that a person walks through picking out just whatever doctrines he wants. One person chooses to believe that women can be preachers, another chooses to believe that women cannot be preachers. One person chooses to believe that baptism is necessary, while another chooses to believe that it is optional. Another chooses to believe in the Pope, while another chooses to denounce the Pope. Satan has tricked many people into believing that God set up this buffet of confusion, that God supplies all the conflicting doctrines, and that He smiles upon whatever selection anyone makes. They forget that *"God is not the author of confusion but of peace"* (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Through this denominational concept of God, Satan has lowered man's view of God. The god of modern religion is a groveling deity with no conviction or consistency. This modern god is Satan's slave imprisoned to serve up any doctrine the denominations desires. Denominational division is clearly Satan's victory.

## Division and the Bible

Imagine the blessing and power we would share if we became one. Jesus prayed for unity in John 17:20,21. He prayed, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."* Notice the degree of unity that Jesus wanted us to share. He prayed that we would all be as closely united with one another as He and God are united. Think of the joy and strength that we would share if we each gave up the man-made changes that we have accepted, came together on common ground, and stood together as Christ prayed. We would be Christians, nothing more, nothing less, and our Lord would be pleased.



We can truly unite just as Christ prayed, but it will require us to make some changes. We must first give up man-made doctrines (Matthew 15:9).

The apostle Paul also stood firmly against Satan's divisive strategy. He wrote, *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (I Corinthians 1:10). Denominational division with all its conflicting doctrines works against us. It weakens us. It is Satan's victory. He has used the divide and conquer strategy so successfully that some people actually give God the credit and praise for this destructive division. It is time for us to rally our forces, unite, and rescue souls deceived by Satan.

This division is what we are fighting. We are staking out common ground where we can stand together in unity and strength against Satan. This requires us to make changes and sacrifices, but we would rather make changes and sacrifices than to be victims of Satan's divide and conquer strategy. We will not foolishly aid Satan by proudly holding on

to man-made changes. We will make certain beyond reasonable doubt that we are loyal to Christ. We will not take chances with our eternity, your eternity, or the eternity of our loved ones.

## The Reformation Movement

The frustration that people experience today is not new. Nearly 500 years ago, back in the 1500's, a movement began that aimed at correcting some of the problems of their time. This movement is called the Reformation Movement because the movement leaders wanted to reform the religion of their day. The corrupt religious leaders of that day did not welcome the reformation efforts. Eventually the reformers were forced to either give up their efforts or forced out of the existing religious establishment. This is basically when modern denominationalism had its beginning:

- the Mennonite church 1525
- the Lutheran church began in 1530
- the Church of England 1534
- the Presbyterian church began in 1536
- the Episcopal church began in 1609
- the Baptist church began in 1611
- the Quakers 1650
- the Methodist church 1729

These were originally attempts to correct religious problems. Unfortunately, the Reformation Movement stopped short of a true return to New Testament Christianity.

## The Restoration Movement

After the Reformation Movement many problems remained and some new ones were created. In the late 1700's another movement stirred. This movement is called the Restoration Movement.

This effort involved various men, such as:

Dr. Abner Jones, a Baptist preacher in 1780

Elias Smith, a Baptist preacher in 1789

James O'Kelly, a Methodist preacher in 1793

Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian preacher in 1807

Thomas Campbell, a Presbyterian preacher in 1807

Alexander Campbell, a Presbyterian in 1810

These men were frustrated with the division and confusion that Satan had stirred up. Instead of just reforming the established denominations, they had a better idea. They wanted to find common ground where people from various backgrounds could come together and be one just as Christ had prayed. To do this they would start from scratch with only the Bible. Their loyalty would be solely to Christ. They made personal sacrifices. They gave up their man-made creeds, man-made doctrines, and man-made practices. They desired to base their efforts on a solid *book, chapter, and verse foundation*. They endeavored to use *Bible words in Bible ways*. They would *speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent*. They wanted *no creed but the Bible*. With this Bible based approach they knew that their eternity would rest upon the safest foundation.

## The Restoration Movement and the Bible

The men who led this search for common ground had clear Bible support for their efforts. In addition to Christ's prayer in John 17:20,21, other verses directly supported and encouraged their plans. Verses such as:

*"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them"* (Romans 16:17). Paul warned us not to be deceived by those who taught different things from the original Bible message. Paul actually



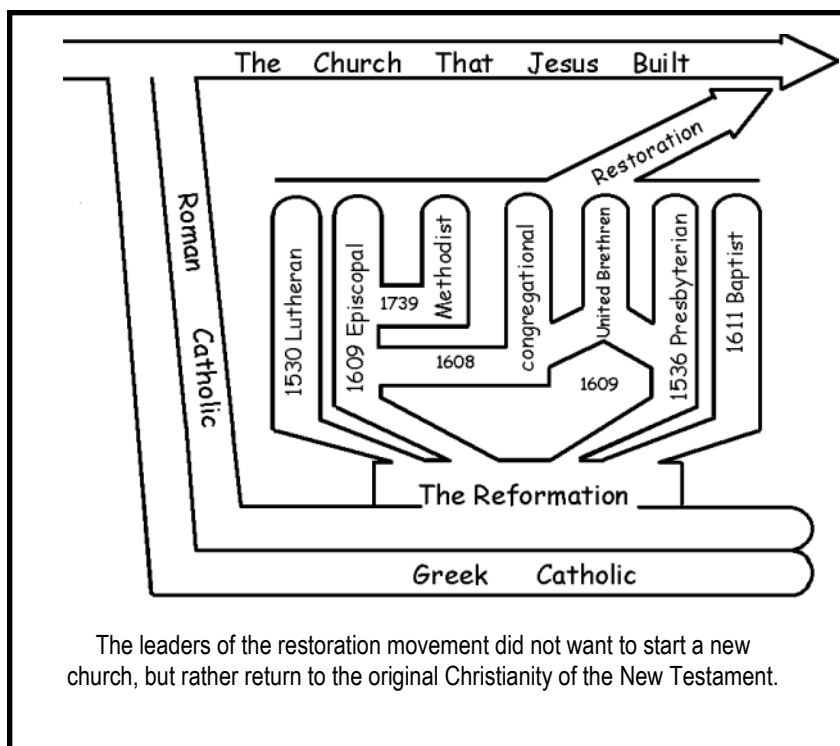
told us to avoid divisive people.

*"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:8). Paul condemns teachers of man-made changes.

*"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern"* (Philippians 3:17). Paul tells us to follow the pattern of Christianity taught in the Bible.

*"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle"* (II Thessalonians 2:15). Again, Paul tells us to follow the Christianity taught in the Bible.

*"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the*



*Father and the Son*" (II John 9). Once again, making changes in Christianity is condemned. Man-made changes are simply wrong.

The leaders of the Restoration Movement recognized a simple truth: If departure from the Bible pattern was wrong back when the Bible was written, then departure is still wrong today. It was just that simple. Satan's sweet propaganda proclaiming that people can *just be sincere* and *attend the church of their choice* is not Bible based. While it is true that we must be sincere, we must also attend the church of Jesus' choice (Matthew 7:21-23). Souls are being lost because of Satan's melodious lies.

## Could It Really Be Done?

The goal of the Restoration Movement is a wonderful idea, but is it really possible? Can we really return to a simple Bible based Christianity? Can we find common ground and stand together against Satan? Certainly! It is just a matter of planting the same spiritual seed that was planted in the first century.



Returning to New Testament Christianity is comparable to restoring the game of baseball to its original form. Baseball could be restored to its original form by tossing out all the changes that have been made over the years and following the original rules. That's the basic idea we follow. We toss out all the changes that men have made over the years and practice only what is clearly authorized in the original rule book, the New Testament. When we do this we overcome Satan's divisive strategy and become the church that Jesus built, nothing more and nothing less. That is how we find common ground to stand together as one. That is also how we find spiritual safety for ourselves and our loved ones.

## Is It Really Safe?

At first, some people are a little uncomfortable with the idea of giving up their creed books and tossing out all their man-made changes. They question if it's really safe to base their faith and eternal hope solely on the Word of God. For many people this idea is too radical and they simply refuse to let go of their old ways, but actually, this is the safest way to heaven.

The Bible teaches...

*"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). Man-made changes are based on what men think is right. These changes have a tragic ending.

*"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23). Man-made changes are man's attempt to direct his own steps, but Jeremiah tells us that man does not have this ability.

*"And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. ... Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch"* (Matthew 15:9, 14). Jesus warned us that man-made changes make worship vain. He also warns us that the authors of these man-made changes are blind leaders.

*"Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it"* (Galatians 3:15). Paul warns us not to add to or take away from God's word, yet that is exactly what man-made changes do.

*"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of*

*Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18,19). John also warned us not to add or take away from God’s word, yet that is exactly what man-made changes do.*

Everyone will agree that the Christians who followed the simple teachings of the apostles in the first century went to heaven. Everyone will also agree that if we reproduce that same Bible based Christianity, we will go to heaven, too. The course for us to pursue is clear. The safest foundation to build our eternal hope upon is a solid *book, chapter, and verse* foundation. Our eternity and that of our loved ones is far too important to take chances.

## What About the Frustration?

Unfortunately, our efforts won’t end religious division. We can’t force people to unite upon this simple Bible based approach. We can warn

### God’s Plan of Salvation

Hear the Gospel: Romans 10:14-17

Believe: John 3:16; Hebrews 11:6

Repent: Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30,31

Confess: Romans 10:9,10; Matthew 10:32,33

Be united with Christ in baptism: Romans 6:3-5

None of the above steps save in and of themselves. It is the grace of God that appointed these as steps leading to the saving blood of Jesus. To get to the saving blood each step must be taken just as it is presented in the Bible. These steps only have value because God’s grace has so granted. Without God’s grace these steps would be worthless. Have you followed these steps to the saving blood of Jesus?

people about Satan's strategy of confusion. We can offer people a way that is free from man-made changes. We can invite people to stand together with us in loyalty to Christ fighting the good fight. But, if a person wants to hold on to man-made changes, then we can't force them to change.

## A Strange Church

Our efforts have resulted in a church that some people say is strange, but that's OK. Our members are really very normal. Some of our members are active in civic organizations that work to make our communities better. They might be your neighbor or your co-worker, but they don't stand out like some sort of weird religious fanatic. They enjoy watching sports and participating in sports like baseball, football, basketball, hunting, fishing, camping and hiking. They like going out to eat, shopping, traveling and many other activities. But when it comes to our souls and eternity, we don't play around. Entering heaven is our priority. We don't take chances. We are fully committed to overcoming Satan's strategy of confusion. If that means that some people will call us names, then that is a burden we will gladly bear because our number one goal is to get ourselves and our loved ones to heaven.

We are a simple church in organization and doctrine. We emphasize *"the simplicity that is in Christ"* (II Corinthians 11:3). We don't have every answer to every question. Sometimes we just have to admit that there are some things we don't know.

Our members are not perfect in every way, and we don't expect you to be either. We are somewhat like a hospital, a place where people meet to help one another get better. We expect our members to keep growing and maturing, but we also realize that we each have different talents and that we are at different stages of growth. We are a diverse

group of personalities. We have some of the most loving people you will ever meet, and some people that are not always pleasant.

In our zeal to warn people about Satan's deceptive strategy, we have not always made the best impression. We have tried in many ways to get their attention but our efforts have not always succeeded. It has been heart breaking to experience failure and see souls continue on down the broad road of destruction, but we refuse to give up. Something would be terribly wrong if we stopped trying to reach people. And so, we continue the fight emphasizing the words of Jesus, "*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves*" (Matthew 10:16).

## Does It Really Matter?

Some people will question, "Oh, come on now, do you really think it matters?"

Many people have been taught that what they believe and practice does not matter as long as they are sincere. Before you accept that idea and stake your eternity on it, check the Bible first. The Bible is the rule book by which you will be judged (John 12:48). Don't merely trust in some man's word, but rather search the scriptures and get your feet planted squarely on a solid *book, chapter and verse* foundation.



Read the following Bible verses, consider the question that follows, and then ask yourself if sincerity alone is acceptable to God. Compare different translations if you would like, the message of these verses will be essentially the same.

Lev. 10:1-3 Why did Nadab and Abihu die?

I Sam. 15:22-33 Why did God reject Saul?

II Sam. 7:7 Did David's sincerity alone please God?  
I Kings 13:1-29 Why did God kill the young prophet?  
Prov. 3:5 What is man not suppose to lean on?  
Prov. 14:12 What is the end of the way that seems right to man?  
Prov. 28:26 What is a person who trusts his own heart?  
Isa. 55:8,9 Does God think like we think?  
Jer. 10:23 What is not in man?  
Matt. 5:19 What does God think of the man who *"breaks the least of these commandments, and teaches men so"*?

## ***YOU ARE INVITED***

Come visit with us, look us over, and ask any questions that you have about the church of Christ.

Sunday 9:00 A.M. Bible Study  
Sunday 10:00 A.M. & 5:00 P.M. Worship Service  
Wednesday 7:00 P.M. Bible Study

If you prefer, you may write or call, and ask us any question that you have. Mail your questions to:

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### **Elders**

George Rumker  
Louis Sharp  
Bill Wharton

### **Deacons**

Glen Gray  
Brady Speer  
Bennie Stephens  
Karl Vandevender  
Kevin Webb

### **Evangelist**

Don McClain

Matt. 7:21-23 Does everyone who says "Lord, Lord" enter heaven?

Matt. 15:9 Why was their worship vain?

Matt. 15:13 Which plants are plucked up?

Matt. 15:14 What if the blind lead the blind?

Matt. 28:20 What are Christians to observe?

Luke 6:46 Who was Jesus angry with?

John 8:32 What sets a person free?

John 12:48 By what is a person judged?

John 14:15 What does love do?

Acts 2:42 What did they continue steadfastly in?

Acts 17:11 Why were these more fair-minded?

Rom. 10:1-3 Why were these lost?

Rom. 16:17 Who are we suppose to mark?

I Cor. 7:19 What matters?

Gal. 1:6-9 What if someone preaches something different?

Gal. 3:15 What about making changes?

Phil. 3:16,17 What is our pattern?

Phil. 4:9 When will the God of peace be with you?

I Thes. 5:21 What are we to test?

II Thes. 1:7-9 Who will be punished?

II Thes. 2:15 What are we to hold?

II Thes 3:6 Who are we to withdraw from?

I Tim. 1:3 What did Paul tell Timothy?

II Tim. 1:13 What are we to hold fast?

II Tim. 2:5 What are we to compete by?

Titus 1:16 What did they profess?

Heb. 11:6 Who does God reward?

James 1:22-26 What if a person is not a doer of the word?

James 2:10 How many laws does a person have to break before God is displeased?

II Peter 3:16 What do some people twist to their own destruction?

I John 2:3-5 Who is a liar?



I John 2:24 What is suppose to abide in Christians?  
I John 4:1 What are we to test?  
I John 5:2,3 What is love?  
II John 6 What is love?  
II John 9-11 Who does not have God?  
Jude 3 What are we to contend earnestly for?  
Rev. 3:1 What did God think about the church at Sardis?  
Rev. 22:14 Who is blessed?  
Rev. 22:18,19 What about adding to or taking away from  
God's word?

The only foundation to build your eternal hope upon is a solid *book, chapter, and verse* foundation. Your eternity and that of your loved ones is far too important to take a chance. We can stand together just as Christ prayed. We can have strength to fight Satan's strategy of confusion. We won't win every soul to Christ, but together we will make a difference.

## Yes, But...

After reading this material you might be thinking, "I agree with what you are trying to do, it's a great idea, but what about those people who choose to stay in a church that accepts man-made changes?" This is an important question. These people, just like everyone else, will, "*Appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*" ( II Corinthians 5:10). God is their judge and He has the final say.

When we think about Jesus' warning, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*" (Matthew 7:21), and when we also consider verses that forbid man to make or accept changes to the Bible (Rom. 16:17, Gal. 1:6-9; 3:15, Rev. 2:18,19), then we understand that many people who think that they are right with God, actually aren't. These

people will find themselves saying, *“Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name and done many wonders in Your name”* (Matthew 7:22). And because Satan has deceived and misled them, Christ will make the sad announcement, *“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”* (Matthew 7:23). That day will be an eternal tragedy for many people.

In some matters it is easy to see that scriptures are being violated and twisted. We do not wish these people any harm, but it is difficult to see how Christ could say to them, *“Well done thou good and faithful servant,”* when they have blatantly disregarded, violated, and twisted the scriptures to please themselves.

Other matters require closer study. When we are faced with the choice of choosing between a way that is clearly ok and a way that might be ok, we have chosen to take the safe path. We believe that our eternity and that of our loved ones is far too important to take a chance. We would rather be safe and have some people think we are a little strange, than risk hearing Jesus say, *“Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”* (Matthew 7:23).

## Our Invitation to You

A common goal: heaven.

A common foe: Satan and his strategy of confusion.

A common desire: to be one, standing united together upon common ground.

A common love: for Christ and our families.

A common loyalty: to Christ and our families.

A common cause: truth.

A common sacrifice: giving up man-made changes for the sake of Christ, family, unity, and eternity.

If returning to a simple Bible based Christianity is your desire, if you want to work for unity in your community, then this series is a tool that you can definitely use. Future chapters include...

Chapter Two, Becoming Just a Christian

Chapter Three, New Testament Worship

Chapter Four, Instrumental Music

Chapter Five, Once Saved, Always Saved

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And we will do the rest.

*COMING NEXT CHAPTER*

That They all  
May  
Be  
One

John 17:21



Chapter two

Becoming just a Christian

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