

# Should We Fellowship with Denominations?

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## I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. When I was in college a congregation worshiped with a Methodist church. The service was hailed as a “breakthrough.”
- B. The issue of fellowshipping with denominations often arises.
  - 1. A church in town is having a revival. Should we go?
  - 2. Several churches are planning a community thanksgiving worship service. Should we participate?
  - 3. The ministerial association has regular prayer meetings at the library. Should I participate?
- C. Those who support fellowshipping with denominations often do so in the name of unity.
  - 1. The bible does teach Christians to be unified.
    - a. Shortly before he died, Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers (Jn 17:20-21).
    - b. Paul pleaded with the Corinthians that there be no divisions among them, but that they be perfectly joined together (1 Cor 1:10).
  - 2. But, is real Christian unity obtained by fellowshipping with denominations?
    - a. Paul told the Corinthians that there should be no divisions among them.
      - 1) Just because we work together with denominations does not mean that divisions do not exist.
      - 2) Working together with denominations often just masks our divisions without trying to resolve those divisions.
    - b. Real Christian unity is obtained by working to resolve divisions, not just having a joint worship service every now & then.
- D. We need to understand what the term “fellowship” really means.
  - 1. The Greek term for “fellowship” literally means “that which is common;” the term is often used to mean “association, close relationship, participation, or sharing in something.”
  - 2. In this sermon, we use “fellowship” to mean having close relationships with denominations.
    - a. Having joint worship services with them.
    - b. Participating with them in joint projects—e.g., joint evangelistic efforts, joint community projects, & the like.
- E. So, what does the Bible say concerning fellowshipping with denominations?
  - 1. We need to give a biblical response.
    - a. The bible will make the man of God “complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tm 3:17).
    - b. “if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pt 4:11).
  - 2. I have no right to give my own opinions on the matter; I must say what the Bible says.

## II. WE CANNOT FELLOWSHIP WITH THOSE WHO TEACH ERROR.

- A. The Bible teaches us to have no fellowship with those who teach false doctrine.
  - 1. 2 Jn 10.
    - a. In John’s day, missionaries traveled greatly & stayed at the homes of fellow Christians—John tells the elect lady not to receive false teachers.
    - b. The principle applies to us today—do not have fellowship with false teachers.
  - 2. Jesus praised the church at Ephesus because they could not bear false apostles (Rv 2:2).
- B. Denominations teach false doctrine; we, therefore, cannot have fellowship with them.
  - 1. Some people say, “Different denominations just have different interpretations; we should be understanding of those interpretations.”
    - a. Many denominations teach doctrines that should scare us.
      - 1) Some groups deny the deity of Jesus—Jesus said we couldn’t go to heaven if we denied his deity (Jn 8:24).
      - 2) Some mainstream denominations teach in their seminaries that Jesus was never resurrected—if Christ is still dead we are still in our sins (1 Cor 15:17).

- 3) Many denominations teach in their seminaries that the Scriptures aren't verbally inspired—Paul claimed that the very words of the apostles used were taught by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:13).
- b. But, many denominational preachers/teachers do not hold these views.
  - 1) Yet, they may teach a plan of salvation not taught in Scripture.
  - 2) Yet, they may teach that man is so lost that he can't do anything about our salvation until the Holy Spirit acts on us.
  - 3) Yet, they may teach that the Holy Spirit still operates in miraculous ways & that one can't be a real Christian without speaking in tongues.
2. Some say that we shouldn't be concerned about doctrine; it's fine for different churches to have different churches to have different beliefs.
  - a. The Bible teaches that false doctrine is not something to take lightly.
    - 1) Jesus told his disciples to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees & Sadducees (Mt 16:12)—We need to be aware of false doctrine today.
    - 2) The Colossians could be cheated through false doctrine (Col 2:8).
      - a) The word translated "cheat" in the NKJV actually means to "carry off as booty or as a captive."
      - b) In reality, this text speaks of people's becoming enslaved to false doctrine; we can become slaves of false doctrine.
    - 3) The Bible refers to false doctrine as "doctrines of demons" (1 Tm 4:11); that is not at all a flattering description.
  - b. False doctrine does matter; we cannot fellowship with those who teach false doctrine.

### III. WE CANNOT WORSHIP IN ERROR.

- A. Some people say it doesn't really matter how you worship as long as you are sincere.
  1. The Bible teaches it does matter how we worship.
    - a. God did not respect the offering that Cain brought (Gn 4:5).
    - b. Nadab & Abihu were consumed by the Lord because they did not worship acceptably (Lev 10:1-2).
    - c. Jesus said that some worshiped him in vain (Mt 15:9).
    - d. Those who worship God must do so in spirit & truth (Jn 4:24).
  2. We sin if we participate in false worship.
- B. Many of the ways denominations worship are contrary to Scripture.
  1. We cannot worship using the instrument.
    - a. The NT is silent concerning the use of instruments in worship.
      - 1) Every passage that mentions music in worship in the NT only mentions singing.
      - 2) Two examples should suffice:
        - a) Eph 5:19.
        - b) Col 3:16.
    - b. Since singing is the only music the NT mentions, singing is the only thing I have a right to do; I cannot add to Scripture (Rv 22:18).
  2. We cannot worship where the Lord's Supper is not taken each Lord's day.
    - a. The early church took the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
      - 1) The reason the early church came together was to take the Lord's Supper.
      - 2) Some people will say, "Well, the text doesn't say that they took it every Sunday."
        - a) The Lord told the Israelites to keep the Sabbath holy (Ex 20:8).
        - b) How many Sabbath days were the Israelites to keep holy—one a month, one a year? No, they were to do it weekly.
    - b. We dare not miss taking the Lord's Supper.
  3. We cannot worship where women take a leading role in the service.
    - a. A woman is not to teach or have authority over a man; she is to be silent (1 Tm 2:12).
    - b. Women must not teach where men are present; they must be silent.
      - 1) They cannot preach or teach a class with men present.
      - 2) They cannot lead the congregation in prayer.
      - 3) They cannot lead the singing.

C. Many denominations worship contrary to the Bible; we cannot participate in such worship.

#### IV. CONCLUSION.

A. Worshiping with denominations is becoming a sticky issue in our brotherhood.

B. We, however, cannot worship with denominations.

1. This does not mean that we consider ourselves more holy than those in denominations—that was the problem with the Pharisee (Lk 18:9-14).

a. The Pharisee considered himself saved because he was so holy, and he looked down on the tax collector.

b. The tax collector went home right with God instead of the Pharisee.

2. This does not mean that there are not good people in denominations.

a. Some of the most devout people I know are in denominations.

b. They are sincere, and they try their best to do what the Bible teaches.

C. Yet, we can have no fellowship with false teachers nor can we worship unbiblically.

D. We must do what God wants in every facet of our lives—and that includes not fellowshiping with denominations. Have you done what God wants in regard to your salvation?