

The Church

With Whom Should I Meet?



Daniel Bubenzer, Philipp Bubenzer, Jean-Denis Rossel



GBV Dillenburg GmbH
Eiershäuser Straße 54
35713 Eschenburg
GERMANY

www.gbv-dillenburg.de

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**For any further questions
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INTRODUCTION

When looking at Christendom today, you may be asking yourself:

- Why are there so many different groups of Christians?
- How can I find Christians that meet according to God's Word?
- Is there a way to live out the unity of the Church according to God, a unity centered around the Lord Jesus?


The aim of this booklet is to examine the origin of the current divisions in Christendom and to show that there is a way to live out the unity of the Church according to God, a unity that is truly centered around the Lord Jesus.

It is not connected to any particular Christian organization but intends to simply go back to the Word of God.

Despite their limitations, the aim of the illustrations is to help in better understanding the teaching found in the Word of God. We recommend that you read the given Bible passages in their respective context in God's Word.

It is our desire that God may use His Word through this booklet to encourage us to respond to the love of the Lord who loved His Church (*Ephesians 5:25*).





Which church is
the right church
according to God?

What does
the Word of
God say?



The Church or Assembly (*)

What is the Church?

The Word of God says:

- “Even us whom He called, not of **the Jews** only, but also of **the Gentiles**.” (*Romans 9:24*)
- “Or is He the God of **the Jews** only? Is He not also the God of **the Gentiles**? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify ...” (*Romans 3:29-30*)
- “... he prophesied that Jesus would die ... **to gather together** in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.” (*John 11:51-52*)

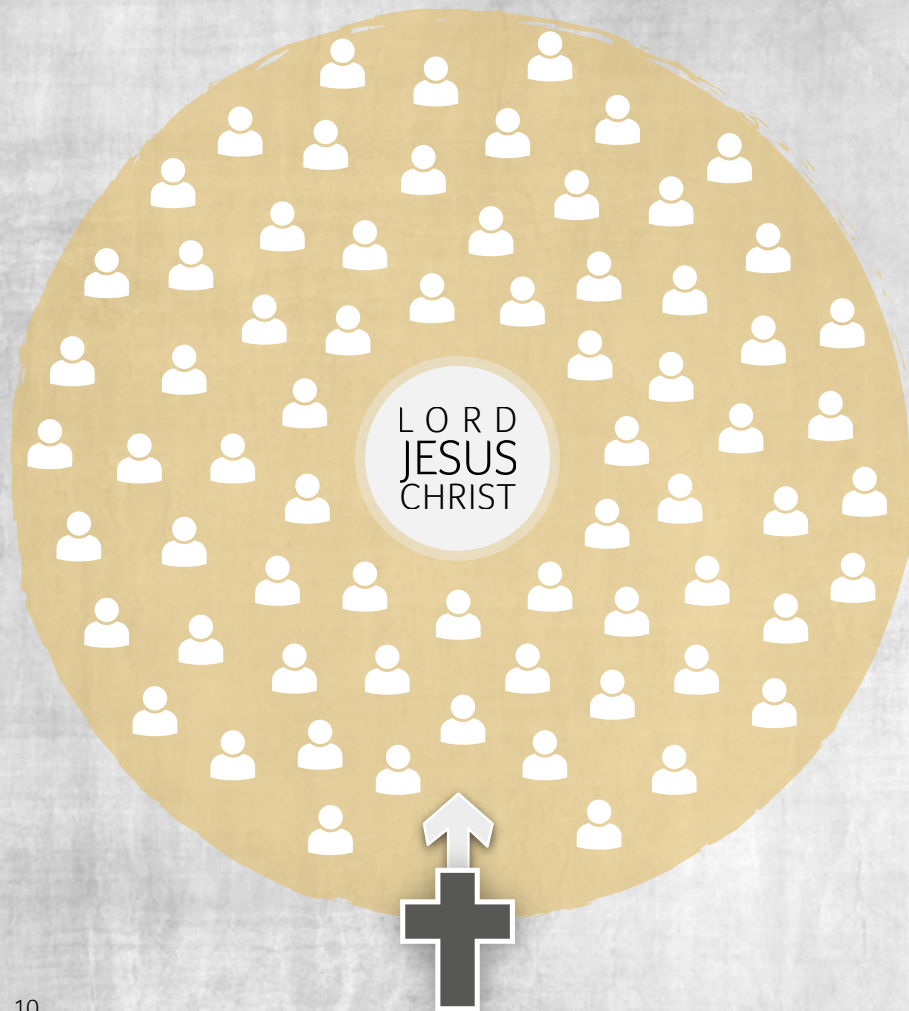
“... the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (*Acts 20:28*)

- “The Lord added **to the church** daily those who were being saved.” (*Acts 2:47*)
- “... so we, being many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually members of one another.” (*Romans 12:5*)

* The word “Church” is the English word used for the Greek word “Ekklesia” which literally translated means “called out ones.” It is used to describe an “assembly.” The Church or the Christian Assembly consists of all who have been saved by the Lord Jesus.

God speaks
of only one
Church!

THE
BIBLE





Who leads the Church?

The Lord Jesus
gathers and leads
His Assembly!




The Word of God says:

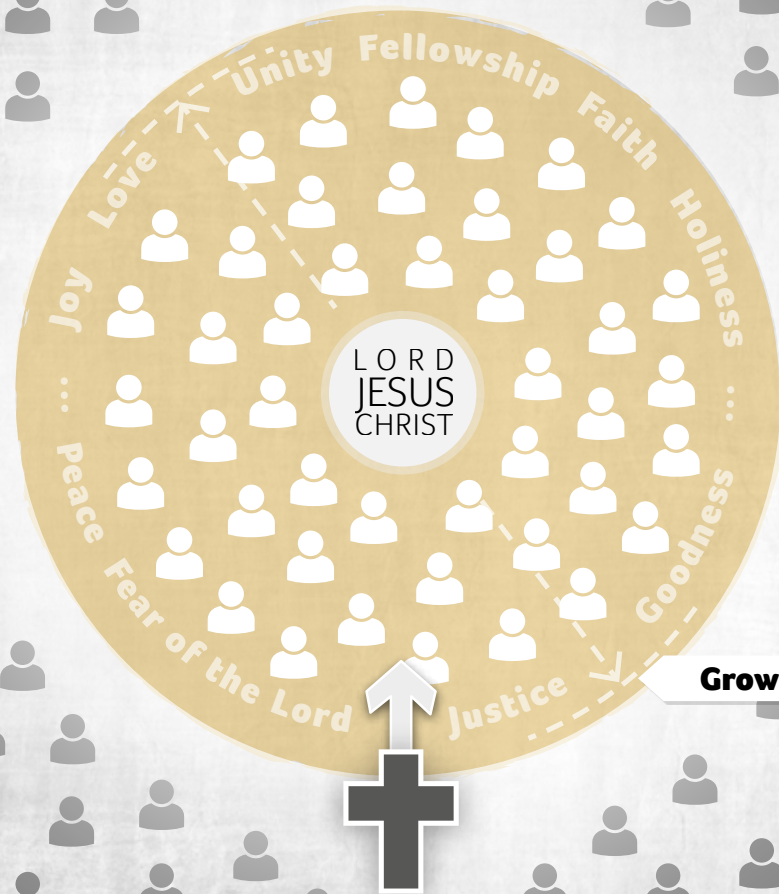
 “He is **the head** of the body, the church, ... that in all things He may have **the preeminence** ... having made peace through the blood of His cross.” (*Colossians 1:18-20*).

 “... **and on this rock I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (*Matthew 16:18*)

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (*Matthew 18:20*)

 “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, ...” (*Ephesians 1:22-23*).

What characterizes
the life of fellowship in
the assembly?



Growth

The Word of God says:

“... they ... whom You gave Me.” *(John 17:24)*

The believers are a gift of the Father to the Son. They are people who live together in love, holiness, unity, faith, fellowship and peace – a visible witness of God’s nature and working in the world.


“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, ... that the world may believe** that You sent Me.” *(John 17:20-21)*

“And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the **love** with which You loved Me **may be in them, and I in them.**” *(John 17:26)*

“Now the multitude of those who believed **were of one heart and one soul**; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.” *(Acts 4:32)*

“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had **peace** and were edified. And walking **in the fear of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, **they were multiplied.**” *(Acts 9:31)*

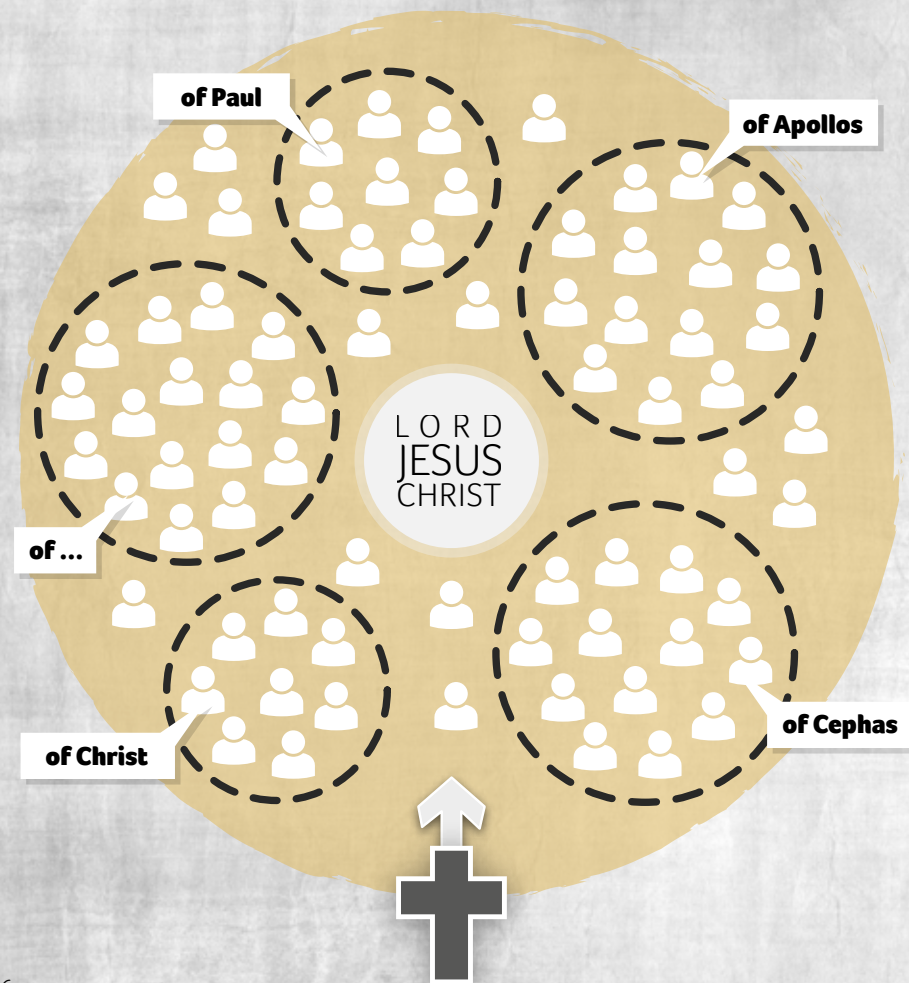
“But you are ... His own special people, that you may **proclaim the praises of Him** who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” *(1 Peter 2:9)*



How did
the divisions
in the Church
come about?

What does
the Word of
God say?






The beginning of disagreements ...


Already early in the history of the Church there were believers that formed different parties!


"... that there are contentions among you."
(1 Corinthians 1:11)




The Word of God says:


 "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." (1 Corinthians 1:10)

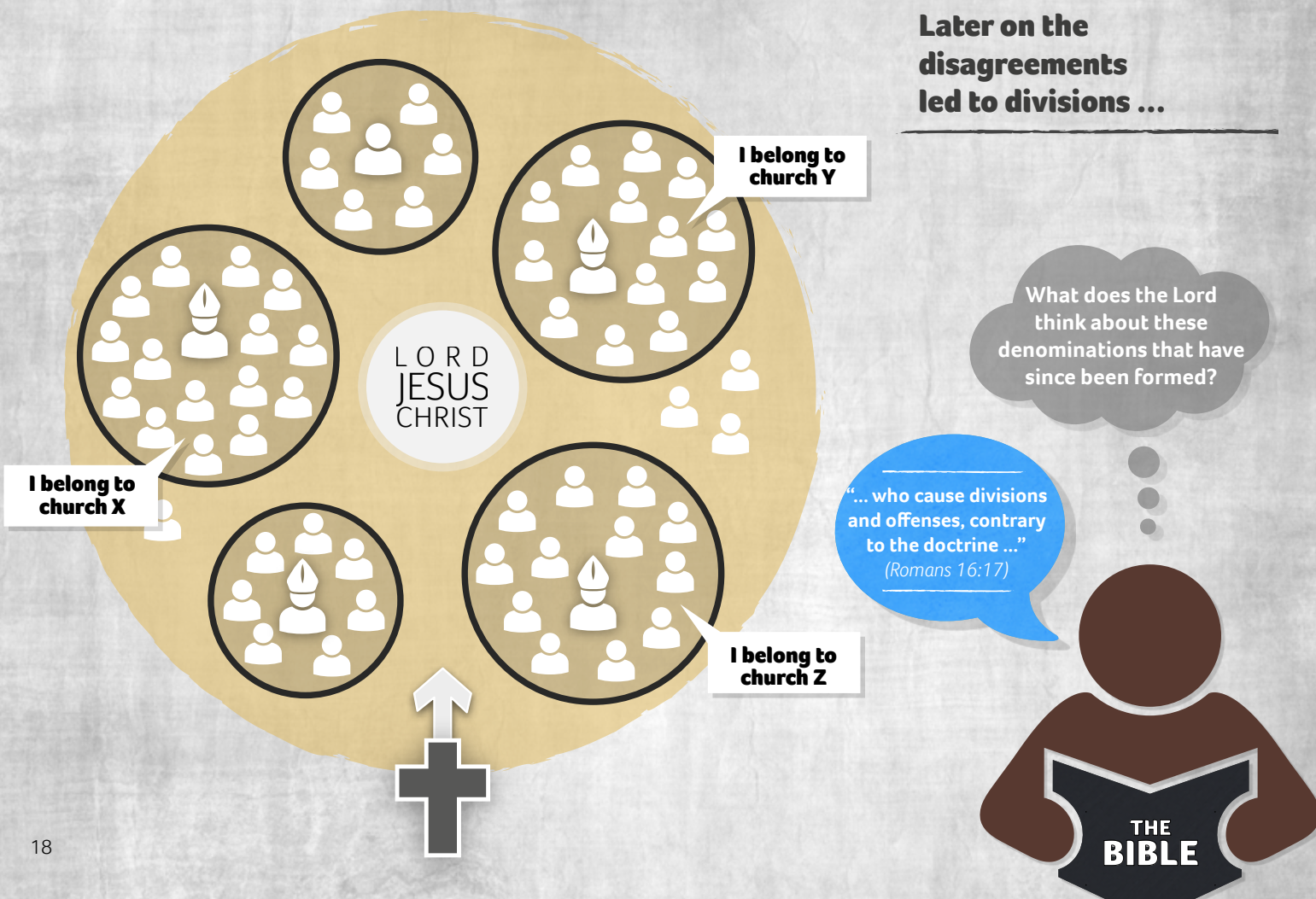
 "For it has been declared to me, concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that **there are contentions among you.**" (1 Corinthians 1:11)

 "Now I say this, that **each of you say**, 'I am of Paul', or 'I am of Apollos', or 'I am of Cephas', or 'I am of Christ.'" (1 Corinthians 1:12)

"Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13)

 "For when one says, '**I** am of Paul' and another, '**I** am of Apollos', are you not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:4)

 "**Who** then is Paul, and **who** is Apollos? But **ministers.**" (1 Corinthians 3:5)



The Word of God says:



“Now **the works of the flesh** are evident, which are ... contentions, jealousies, ... dissensions, heresies.” (Galatians 5:19-20)

“... when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you ...” (1 Corinthians 11:18)

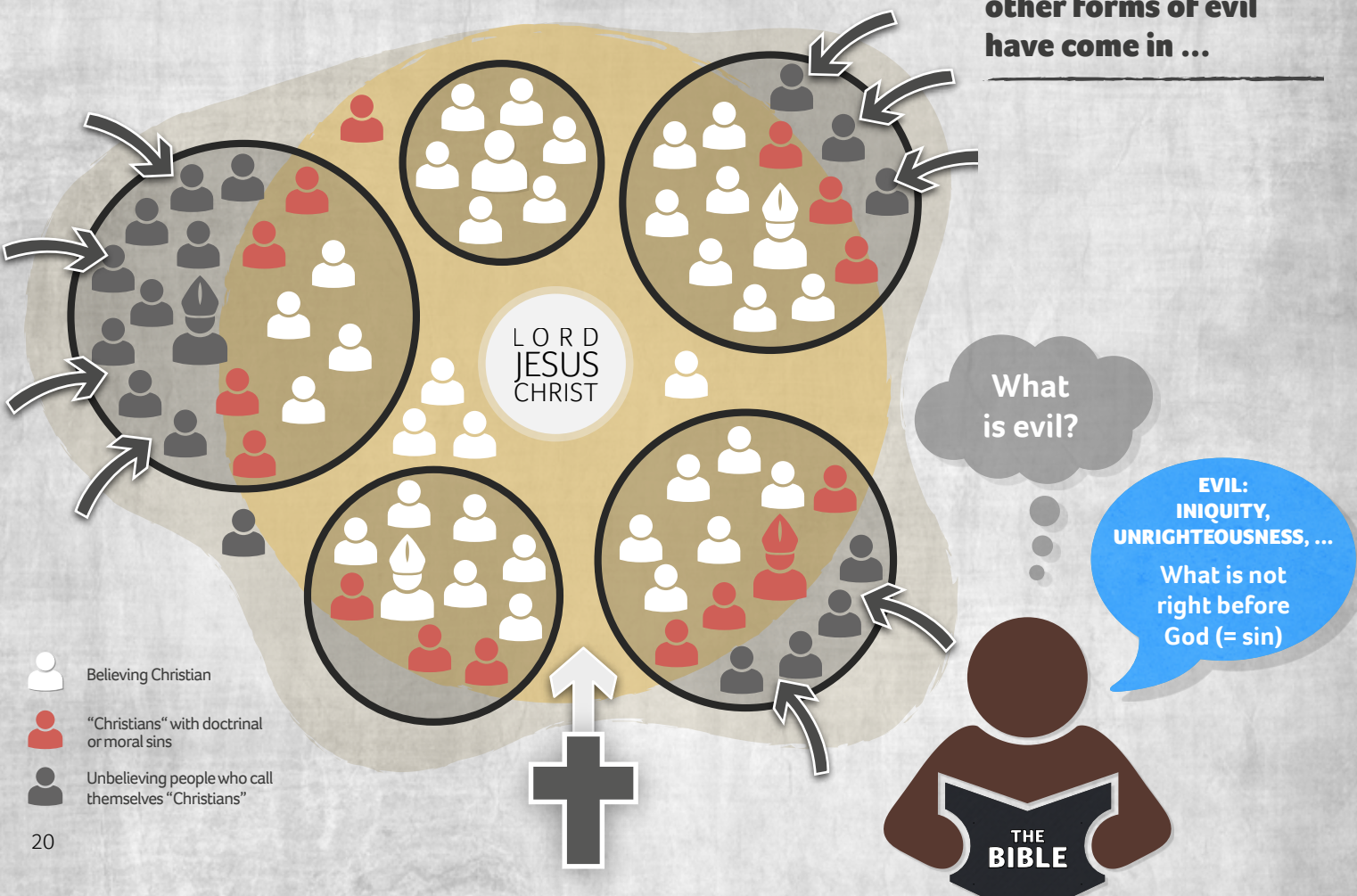


“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses **contrary to the doctrine** ...” (Romans 16:17)

NOTE:

With time things that are not doctrinally sound have come in and caused divisions:

- Clergy
- Denominations after various
 - doctrines
 - rules
 - gifted and influential personalities
 - etc.



The Word of God says:

On doctrinal evil

“... there will be **false teachers among you**, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them ... and many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words.” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

“Who hindered you from **obeying the truth**? ... A little leaven leavens the whole lump ... but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.” (Galatians 5:7,9-10)

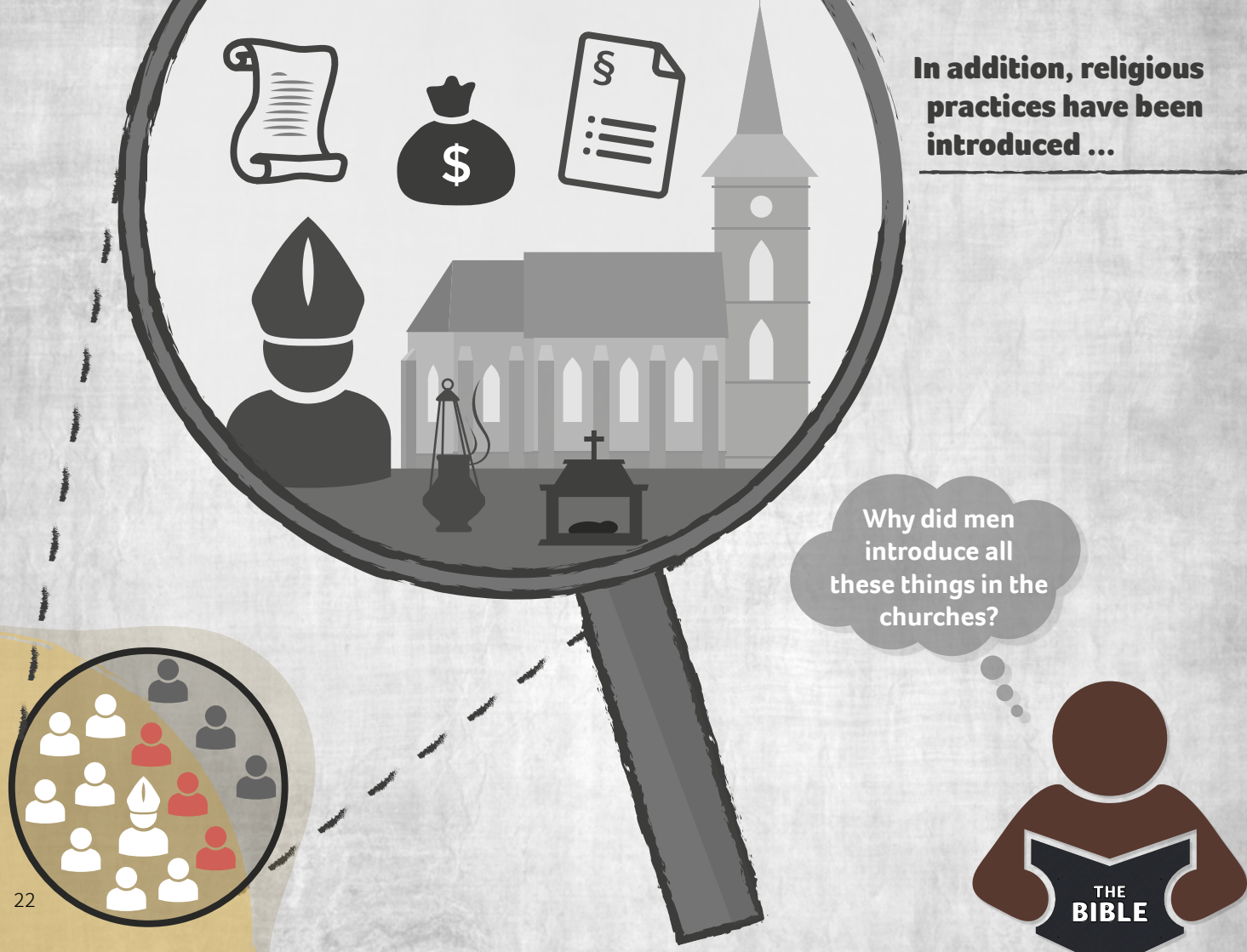
On moral evil

“It is actually reported that **there is sexual immorality among you ...**” (1 Corinthians 5:1)

“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yes I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with **anyone named a brother**, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person.” (1 Corinthians 5:9-11)

On unbelievers

“**Certain men have crept in** unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turned the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude v. 4)






In addition, religious practices have been introduced ...

Why did men introduce all these things in the churches?



The Word of God says:

-  **“Why ... do you subject yourselves to regulations ...** – according to the commandments and doctrines of men ... against the indulgence of the flesh.” *(Colossians 2:20-23)*
-  **“And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, **that they might bring us into bondage**).**” *(Galatians 2:4)*
-  **“Stand fast therefore in the **liberty by which Christ has made us free**, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”** *(Galatians 5:1)*

NOTE:




Example of such added religious principles and practices:

Following the commandments of the people

1. Material church building
2. List of membership
3. Employed priests
4. Human ordination
5. Liturgy/set program
6. Priests' garments
7. Tithing
8. Special days
9. Altars
10. Human mediator


Follow Christ in liberty:

- Believers are the house of God. *(Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5)*
- Every believer is a member of the body of Christ. *(1 Corinthians 12:27)*
- Christ has made all believers priests *(1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6)*
- Christ sends out. *(compare Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 13:1-4)*
- Christ directs by His Spirit. *(1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 14:26)*
- Christ is the robe/dress of the believer. *(Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:12)*
- Everything belongs to the Lord. *(1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:9-14)*
- Living with Christ every day. *(Galatians 4:10; Colossians 2:16-17; Acts 2:46)*
- Christ is the altar. *(Hebrews 13:10-13)*
- Christ is the mediator. *(1 Timothy 2:5)*

-  Believing Christian
-  "Christians" with doctrinal or moral sins
-  Unbelieving people who call themselves "Christians"


What does God say about this confusion?


The Word of God says:

 "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His', and, 'let everyone who names the name of Christ **depart from iniquity.**' But in a **great house**, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, **some** for honour and **some** for dishonour." (2 Timothy 2:19-20)

NOTE:

Indifference towards evil in the house of God is also a sin: It is indifference to the Lord and our brothers and sisters. A believing Christian cannot remain indifferent regarding evil (iniquity) in the Church.

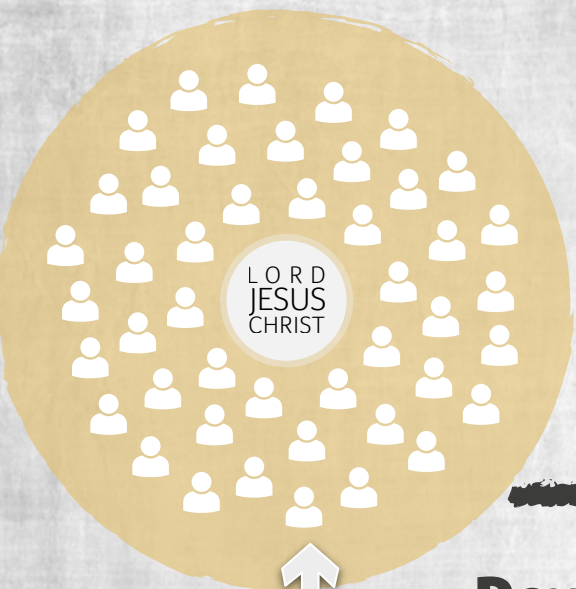
 "You have not rather mourned that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:2)

 "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him, for he who greets him, shares in his evil deeds." (2 John vv. 10-11)



Summary:

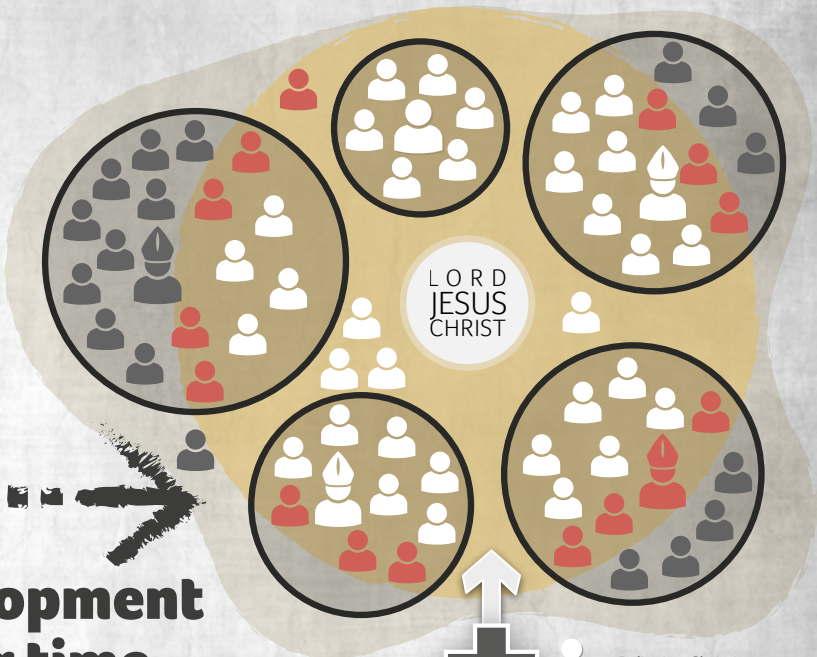
In the beginning of the Church "House of God"



Development over time

* Even today, the house of God consists of all believing Christians. Although it is no longer visible as such for us humans – God sees it.

Today* "Great House"



- Believing Christian
- "Christians" with doctrinal or moral sins
- Unbelieving people who call themselves "Christians"

The Word of God says:

In the beginning of the church:
The "house of God"
(1 Timothy 3:15)

today:
a "great house"!
(2 Timothy 2:20)

The first epistle to Timothy presents the house of "God" which consists solely of believing Christians, and at the beginning of the church this was also visible as such (1 Timothy 3:15). The second epistle however, speaks of a "great" house where there is everyone who "names" the name of the Lord (2 Timothy 2:19), thus all who call themselves Christians; whether they are believers or not, whether they live to the honor of the Lord or not.

The teaching about the vessels of this "great house" gives us further details:

- In the vessels of gold and of silver, we can see believers who show the characteristics of divine justice and glory (gold) and of redemption (silver).
- In the vessels of wood and earth, we can see unbelievers, characterized only by their earthly nature.
- Apart from their material, the vessels are distinguished by the honor they bring to the Master of the house: certain vessels are to honor, others to the dishonor of their Master.
- Thus, in the "great house," Christendom, there are sadly strange elements that have come in and that are not "of God," but to His dishonor.





What to do given
such confusion and evil
in the Church?

How to
live out the unity
of the Church
around the
Lord Jesus?

Option 1:

Living out the unity by
“**breaking down
the walls**”

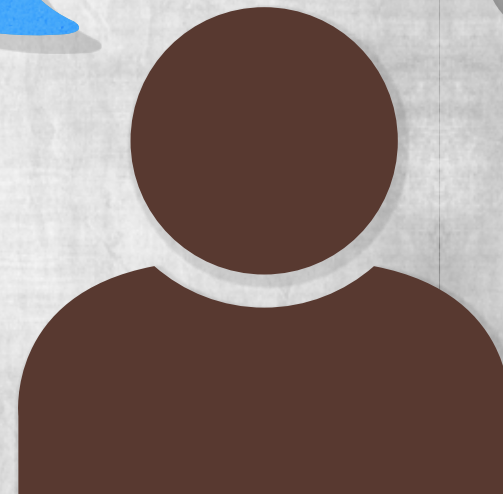
Option 2:

Living out the unity by
“**separating
from evil**”

Option 1:

Living out the unity by
“breaking down the walls”

Let's
have a look at
this **option 1** in
the following
pages ...



Let's show the love
between us!

Let's show a
tolerant attitude!

Our differences
are our strengths!

Let's
be one!

Each group
is a flower and together
we are a beautiful
bouquet!

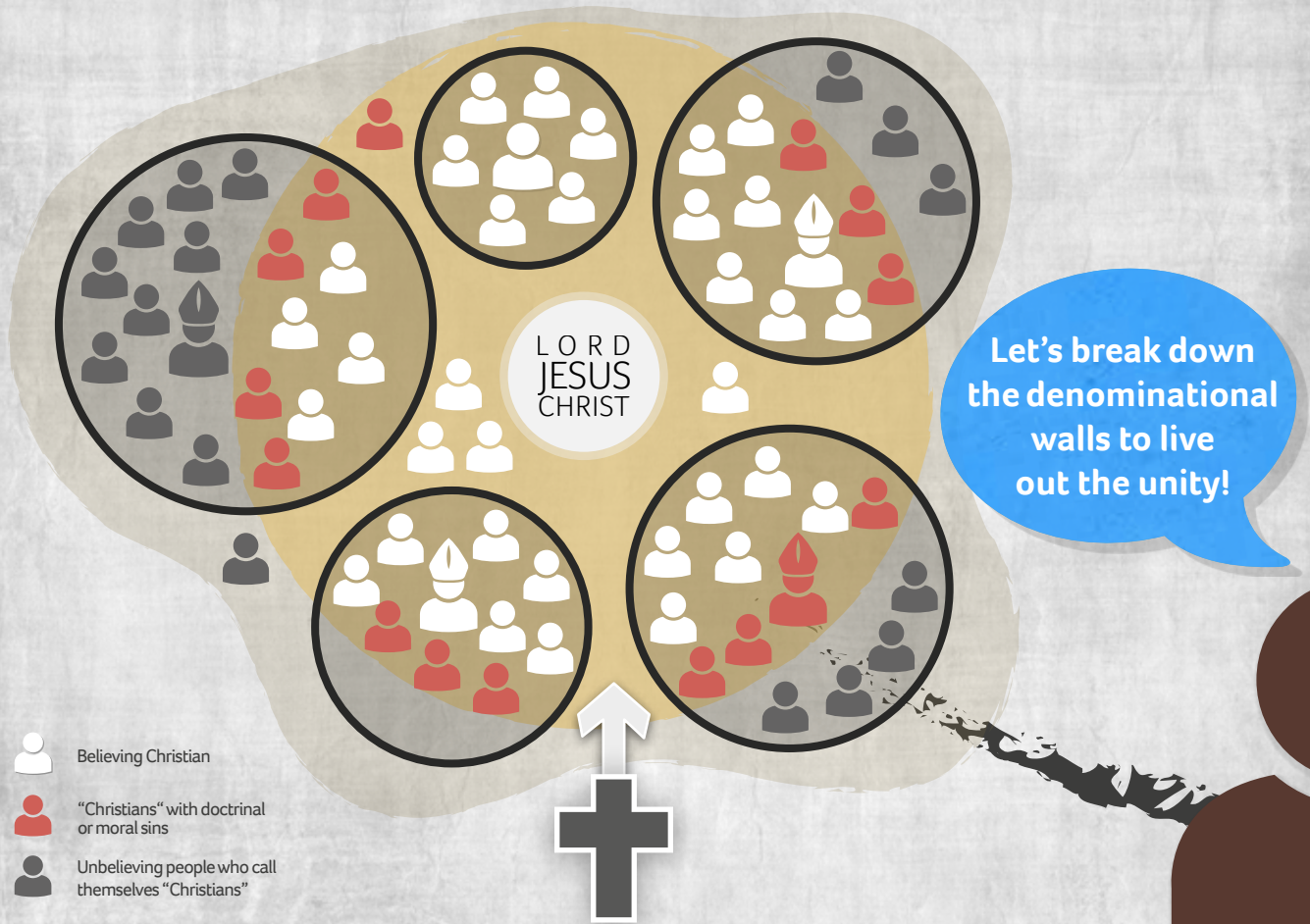
Focus on what
we have in common
and forget what
separates us!

Some say:

In heaven
there will be no doctrinal
walls! Let's bring them
down now!

Let's
bring our churches
together!

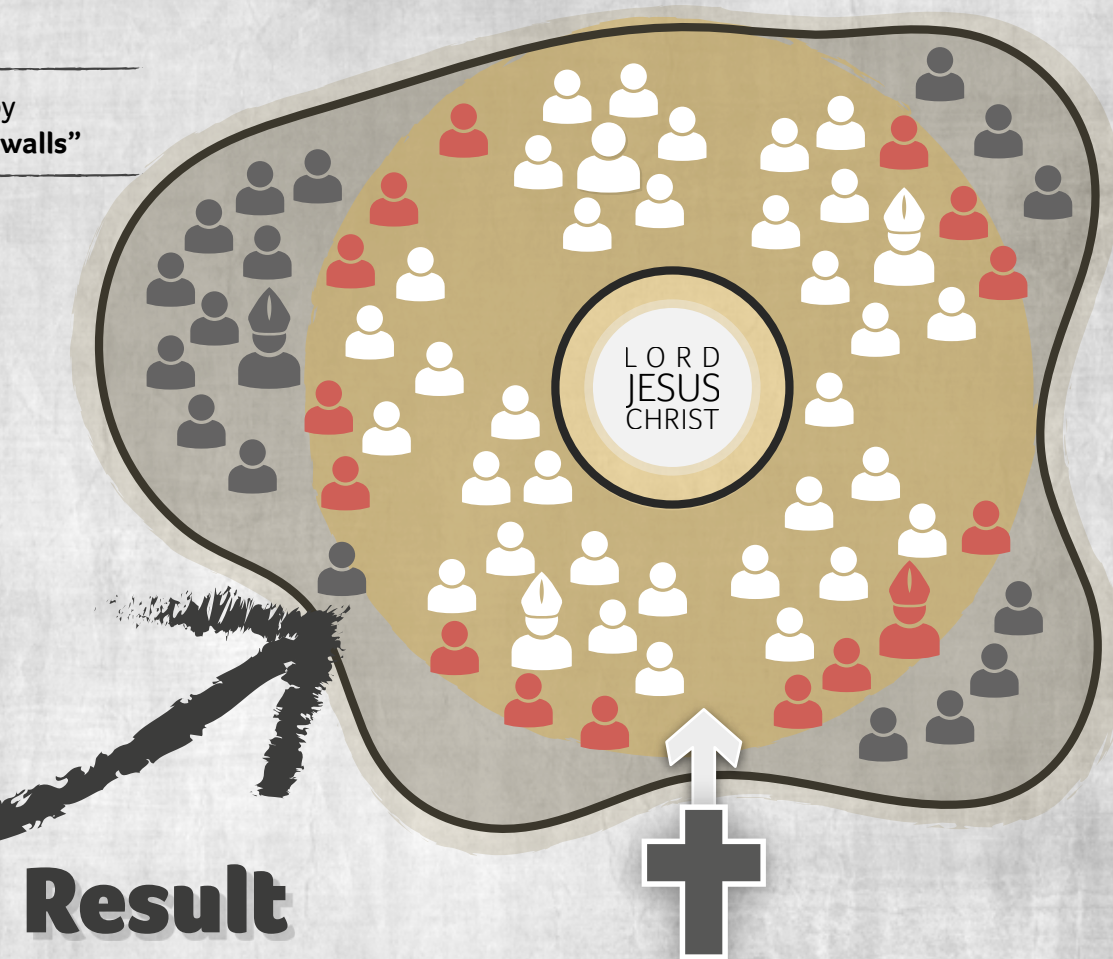
If we are
united, we will
also be more
convincing!



- Believing Christian
- "Christians" with doctrinal or moral sins
- Unbelieving people who call themselves "Christians"

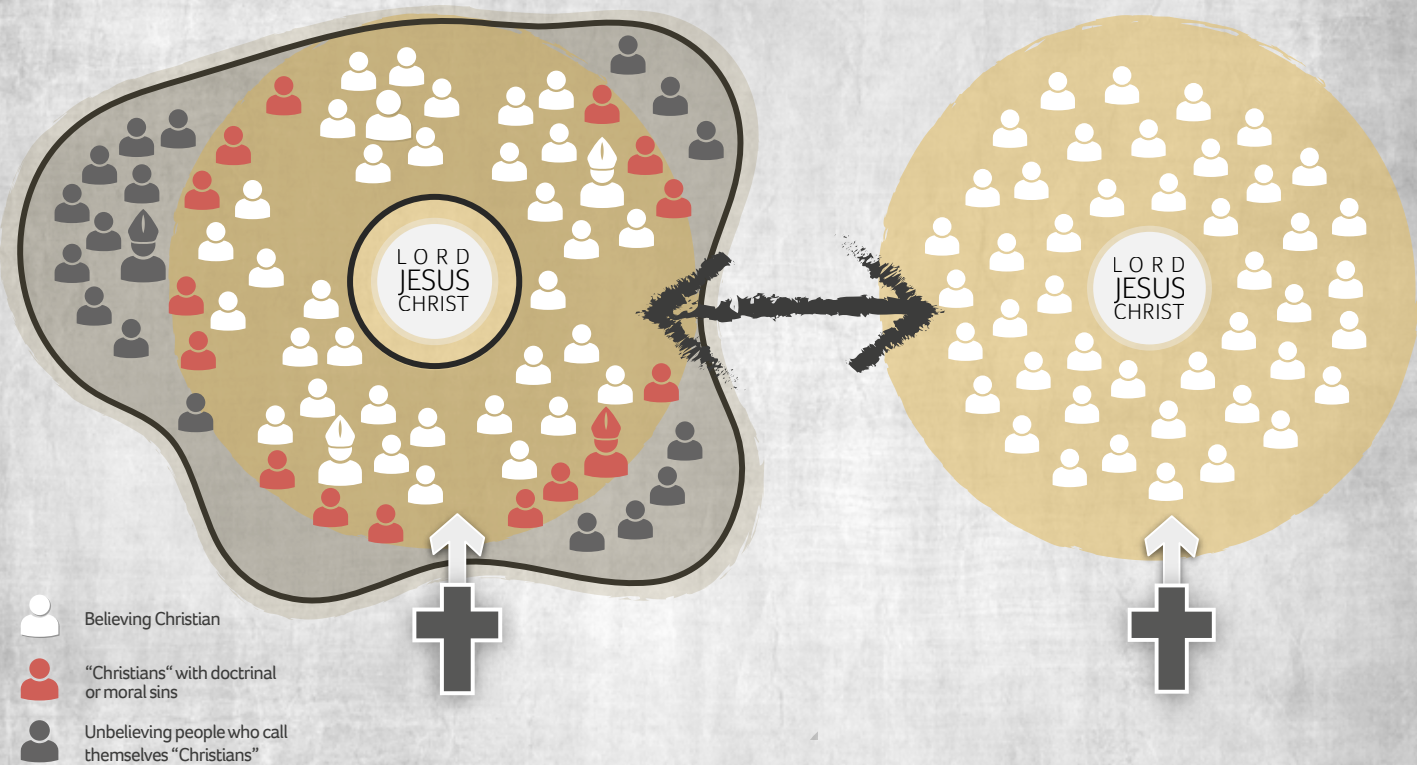
Option 1:

Living out the unity by
"breaking down the walls"



Result

Comparison with the beginning



Outwardly this seems to provide a certain unity...but this "unity" is fabricated through an indifference towards evil.

"For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? ... And what part has a believer with an unbeliever?"
(2 Corinthians 6:14-15)

Option 1:

~~Living out the unity by "knocking down the walls"~~
CONSEQUENTLY IT IS NOT A UNITY ACCORDING TO GOD, AROUND THE LORD JESUS

Option 2:

Living out the unity by
“separating from evil”

Let's
have a look at
this **option 2** in
the following
pages ...

The Word of God says:

“Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Timothy 2:19)

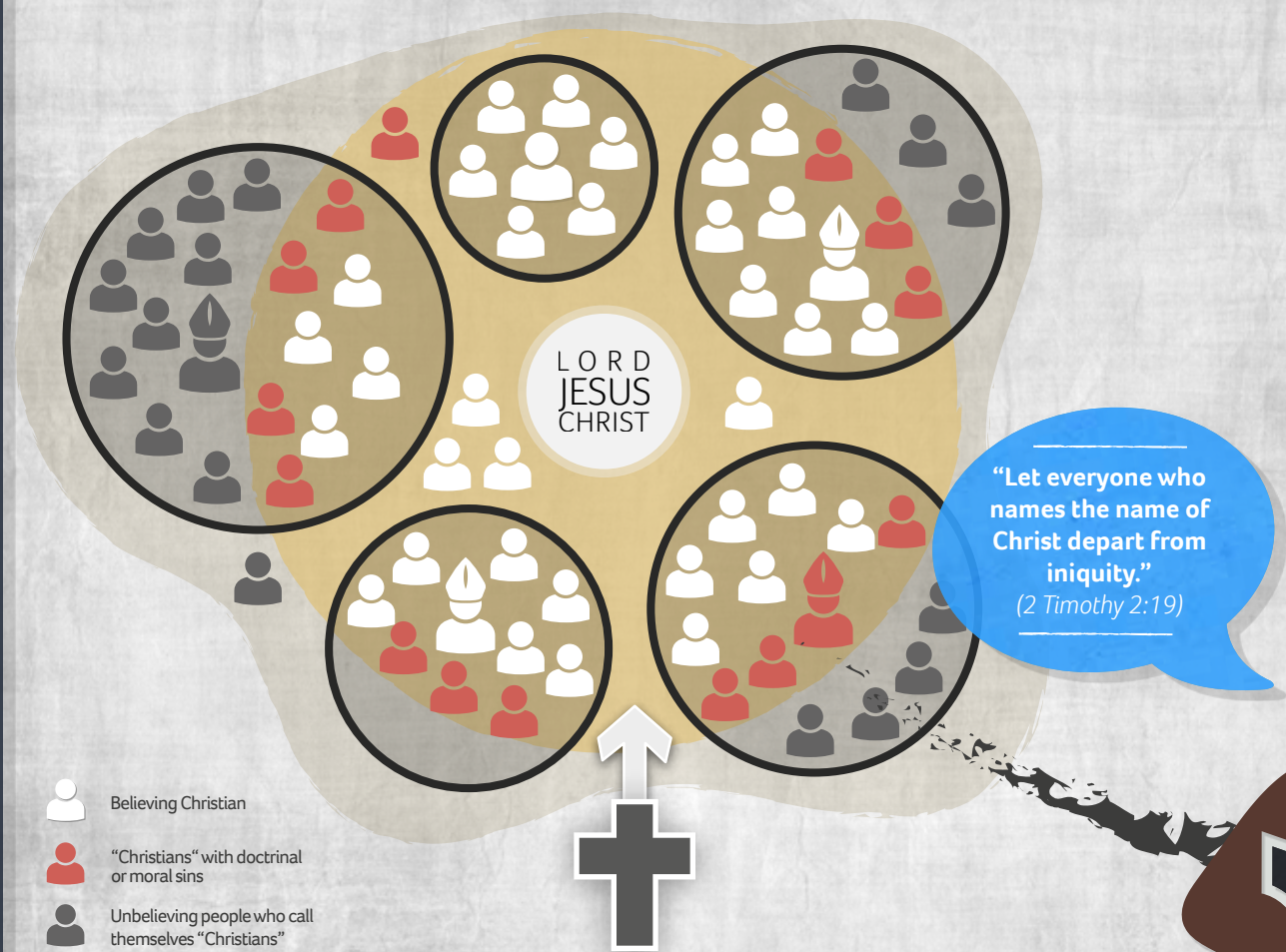
“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and clay, **some** for honor and **some** for dishonor.



Therefore if anyone **cleanses himself from the latter**, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:20-21)

Firstly, it is about confessing iniquity in one's own life, and to separate from it. Then, however, it is about other people: the Greek word „to cleanse oneself away” in 2 Timothy 2:21 is the same word as “to purge out” in 1 Corinthians 5:7:

- In 1 Corinthians 5:7, it is an individual believer living in sin. In order that the Corinthians could be a “new lump” there was no other way but to „purge out the old leaven”, i.e. to separate from this person and to cut off fellowship (discipline by the assembly).
- In 2 Timothy 2:21, we have the opposite case: given that it is no longer possible to remove the evil around me, I have sadly to separate myself from the vessels of dishonor, and can no longer have fellowship with them. Only in this way will I be “a vessel to honor, sanctified, useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

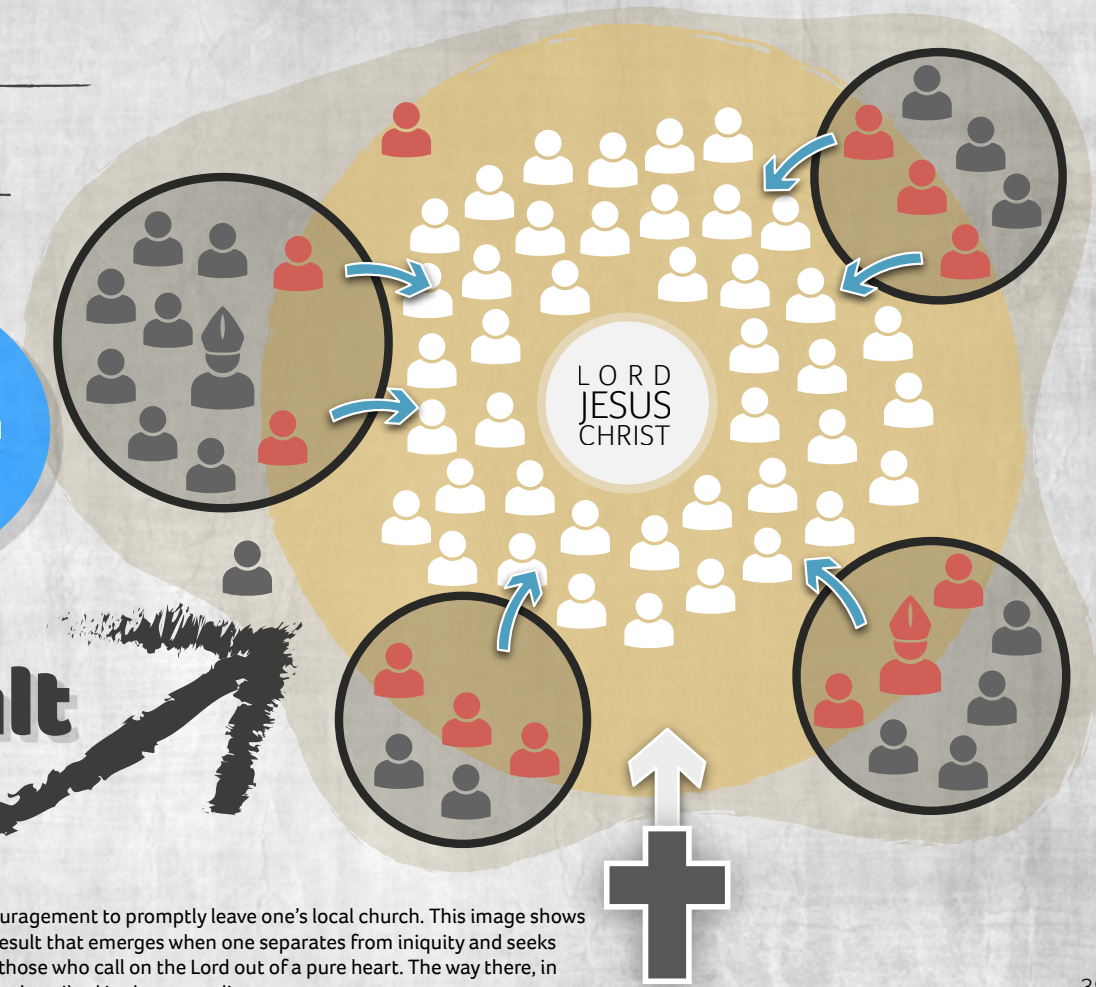


Option 2:

Living out the unity by
"separating from evil"

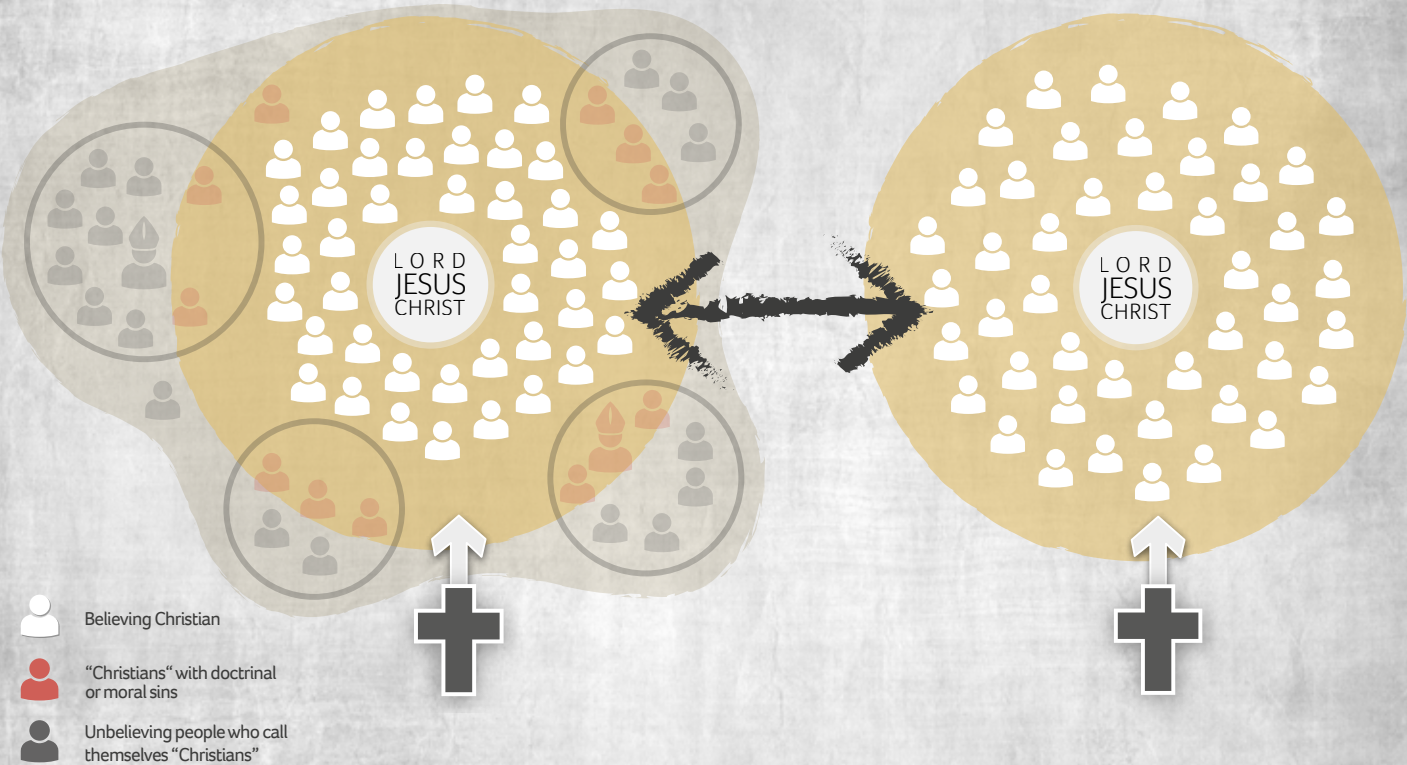
"Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

Result



This is not an encouragement to promptly leave one's local church. This image shows the beautiful end result that emerges when one separates from iniquity and seeks fellowship with all those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. The way there, in love and humility, is described in the appendix.

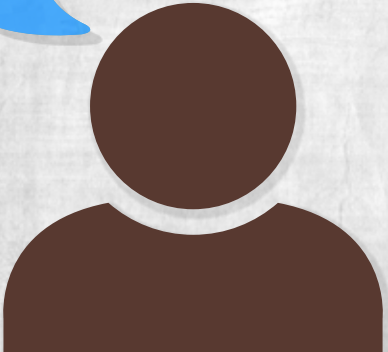
Comparison with the beginning



ONE around the Lord Jesus!

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

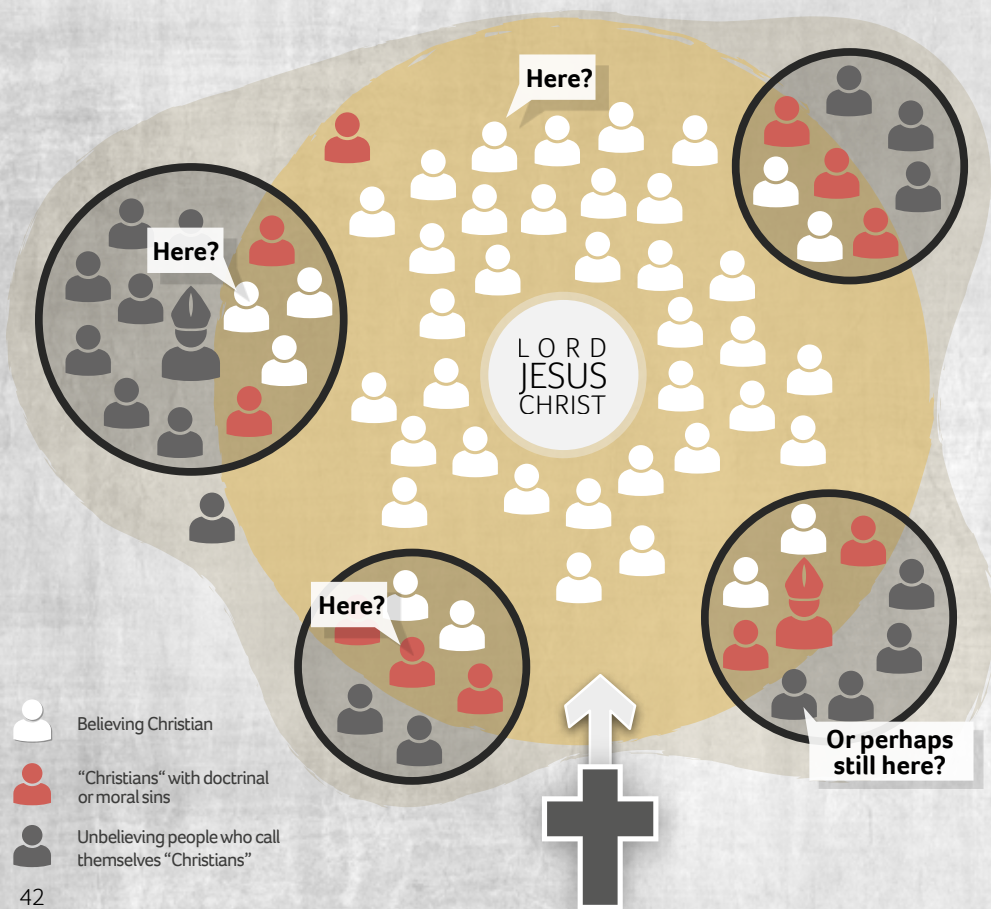
"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love for the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart." (1 Peter 1:22)



Option 2:

Living out the unity of the church
"seeing from evil"

IT IS POSSIBLE EVEN TODAY TO LIVE OUT THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AROUND THE LORD JESUS



And now ...

Where am I ?!

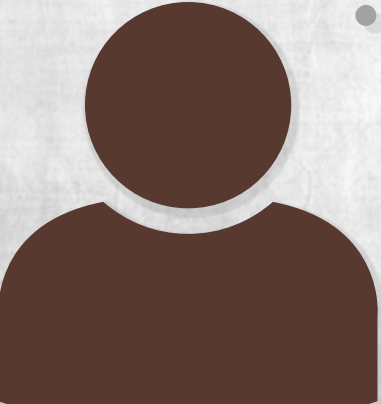
"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

(Matthew 18:20)



"Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

(2 Timothy 2:22)



What to do
to live out the unity
of the Church?



“Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”

(Philippians 2:2-3)

APPENDIX

What to do to live out the unity of the Church?



“And above all things,
have fervent love for one
another, for love will cover a
multitude of sins.”
(1 Peter 4:8)

The Word of God says:

1. Departing from own personal iniquity by confessing it.

📖 “If **we** confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” *(1 John 1:9)*

📖 “... **First** remove the plank **from your own eye**, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” *(Matthew 7:5)*

2. Speak with my brother or sister alone to help them to separate from evil.

📖 “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one **in the spirit of gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” *(Galatians 6:1)*

📖 “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault **between you and him alone**. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.” *(Matthew 18:15)*

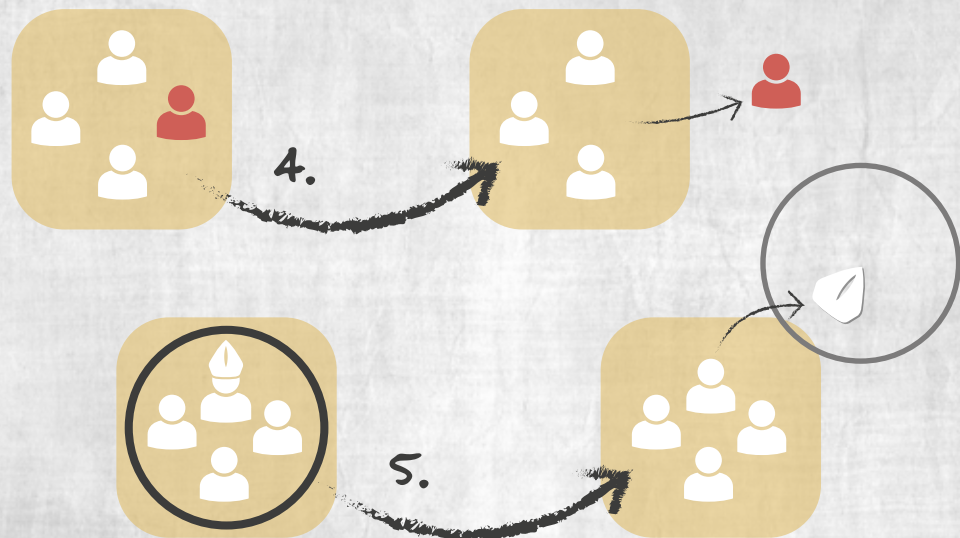
3. If my brother or my sister doesn’t want to listen, speak to them with two or three to help them separate from evil.

📖 “But if he will not hear, take **with you one or two more**, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” *(Matthew 18:16)*

📖 “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, **we have fellowship with one another** and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” *(1 John 1:7)*

APPENDIX

What to do to live out the unity of the Church? (continued)



The Word of God says:

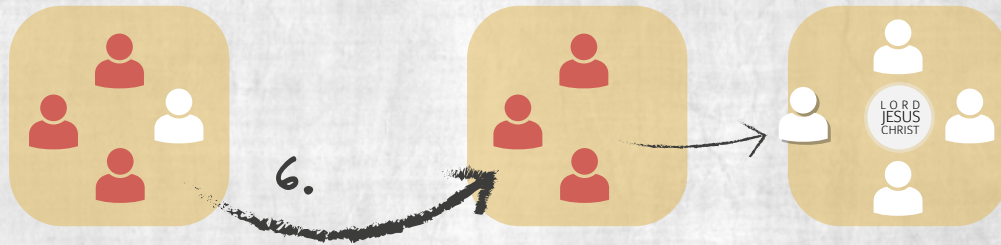
4. If they don't listen but remain in their sinful life, the assembly has no choice but to discontinue the fellowship.

- “And if he **refuses** to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he **refuses** even to hear the church, let him be to you as a heathen or a tax collector.” (*Matthew 18:17*)
- “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore **purge out** the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.” (*1 Corinthians 5:6-7*)
- “Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore **put away** from yourself the evil person.” (*1 Corinthians 5:12b-13*)
- “In all things, you proved yourselves **to be clear in this matter.**” (*2 Corinthians 7:11*)

5. If a group/church sets itself apart from other Christians by over emphasising certain “truths” or the introduction of religious practices (example: clericalism, member list), the way of recovery is to turn collectively from this evil and to return to the word of God and to gather simply around the Lord Jesus.


- “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘**I** am of Paul,’ or ‘**I** am of Apollos,’ or ‘**I** am of Cephas,’ or ‘**I** am of Christ.’” (*1 Corinthians 1:12*)
- “Is **Christ divided?**” (*1 Corinthians 1:12*)
- “... why ... do you **subject yourselves to regulations** ... according to the commandments and doctrines of men?” (*Colossians 2:20, 22*)
- “For where two or three are gathered together **in My name**, I am there in the midst of them.” (*Matthew 18:20*)

What to do to live out the unity of the Church? (continued)




The Word of God says:

6. If a group of Christians does not want to separate from evil collectively (together), I have no other choice but to separate from them and to seek fellowship with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart to live out the unity of the Church around the Lord Jesus.

 “Let everyone that names the name of Christ **depart from** iniquity ... **but pursue** righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:19, 22)

 “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? ... Therefore, **come out from among them** and be separate says the Lord ... **I will be a Father to you**, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17, 18)

 “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves** from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1)

**Every interaction, every decision and every acting from 1.-6.
requires intensive prayer and will then be to blessing
if it is done in genuine love, gentleness, patience and humbleness.**

L O R D
JESUS
CHRIST

And how
will it be in
heaven ... ?

“... as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

(Ephesians 5:25-27)




Next step

Perhaps you have read this booklet being:

- A member of a “church”?
- A Pastor, an Elder or a Deacon?
- A believer that remains alone because you have been disappointed by the “churches” that you know?
- Someone who desires simply to meet other believers that really gather around the Lord?

What should you do if you have found that there is really only one Church and that you can live out the unity of that one Church today?

- Review prayerfully and with the study of His word what is your responsibility before God in your given circumstances.
- Consider the doctrines and practices of the place where you meet, and obey God’s thoughts rather than men’s.
- Seek fellowship with all those that desire also to meet around the Lord Jesus.
- Share what the Lord shows you with your brothers and sisters so that they can also live in unity!

 “For there the Lord commanded the blessing – life forevermore.” *(Psalm 133:3)*



“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.”

(John 17:20-21)

**“... our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us,
that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself
His own special people, zealous for good works”**

(Titus 2:13-14)

contact

If you would like to contact me, I would be happy to receive your phone call or email:



CONTACT
contact@lechemin.ch

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