

Teach God's plan of salvation, not one developed by men (Mk 16:15-16; Rom 10:9-10; Ac 2:38; Rom 6:3-6). People teach many conflicting plans. But God says we must believe in Jesus, repent, confess our faith in him with our mouths, and be immersed/baptized for the remission of sins. Any other plan of salvation is of men, not of God. And human plans do not work (Eph 2:8-10).

Worship God to please Him, not to entertain people (Jn 4:23-24; Matt 15:9). People add many things to worship today that are not authorized in the New Testament. On Sundays they prayed, taught Scripture, and sang without mechanical accompaniment (Ac 2:42; 1Co 16:1-2; Ac 20:7; Eph 5:18-19). May we keep it simple too, for that is what the New Testament teaches.

The essential concept of denominations is wrong. How many denominations do you read about in the New Testament? That's right: none, for none existed. Denominations exist by the will of men, not the will of God. Each Christian was identified with Jesus (Ac 11:26; 1Pe 4:16) — a member of the church in the universal sense. And each disciple was part of a local congregation (Ac 9:26-29). But the congregations did not form regional organizations. Some churches of Christ today need to beware, for they are doing things that tend toward the concept of denominations. Let's keep it simple, like it was in Scripture.

There are so many other things we could say. But stand with God's word. Know His will. Compare all opinions, traditions, and teachings with Scripture. And remember: knowing truth is the best antidote for error. Grow in your knowledge and love for Scripture, and you will not fall for error. Rather, you will faithfully serve your Lord.



CHURCH OF CHRIST

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THINGS ABOVE

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."
— Colossians 3:1, 2 —

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If You Don't Stand For Something . . .

By Shane Carrington

Several years ago a country and western song re-popularized an old saying: "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." That saying has become cliché long before the song arrived, because it is a true statement.

But this saying doesn't just make a catchy tune on the radio. In fact, one of the reasons so many people get misled or wander away from God is because they don't stand for anything.

Jude said we should “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v 3b). Paul wrote about the importance of spiritual growth, saying it will prevent us from being children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph 4:14). He further said that growing in our stand with God will enable us to be people who are in “speaking the truth in love” and who are continuing to grow up in all things into Christ” (v 15). May we stand with God and His word, so we will not fall for anything contrary to Scripture.

Standing in our world has its difficulties. We live in a culture that accepts almost anything. Whether you claim to be Jewish, Muslim, or Christian, many in our culture think you are acceptable to God and headed to heaven. Never mind that Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me” (Jn 14:6). Jesus made other narrow statements, demanding commitment to Him and His word alone.

“Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life. And there are a few who find it” ... “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” (Matt 7:13-14, 21).

We dare not risk doing other of them what Jesus says. And he wants us to faithfully teach His word to this lost world (*see* Matt 28:18-20).

How can we be sure we are following truth — standing for right — rather than falling for religious error that permeates our world? The following list is certainly incomplete, but here are some important matters of truth that will help us stand with God — and not fall for perverted gospels (*see* Gal 1:6-9).

Jesus is Lord and Head of the church (1Ti 6:15; Matt 16:18; Eph 1:21-23). The only way to truly honor him is by sincerely following his word (Jn 8:30-32). And there is only one church (Eph 4:4-6).

Realize the importance of Scripture (2Ti 2:15; 3:16-17; Eph 3:3-5; 6:17; 2Pe 3:14-17). The Bible is God’s word to humanity. When God thundered on Mount Sinai, his word was obvious and powerful. But when you read the written word today, it is just as much his. Let the power of that word work in your life. Read, meditate, study!

Adhere to Scripture without addition or subtraction — understand and apply Bible authority to your lifestyle and practices (Col 3:17; Gal 1:6-7; Rev 22:18-19; 2Jn 9). Not only is the Bible God’s word, it is also perfect in God’s message to us. Scripture needs no improvements. In fact, any attempt to improve on what the Bible says is an accusation against God. Remember: His word is always better than ours! Follow the teachings of Scripture without additions or subtractions.

Be loyal to the New Testament in belief and practice, for the Old Testament is no longer the blueprint on worship or service to God. Like scaffolding when constructing a building, when the job was done (salvation is now through Jesus in the New Testament), the Old Testament was fulfilled and removed (Col 2:13-17; Heb 10:1-4, 9).