



## Unity In Christ – Part 3

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Previously, we established that God demands unity (not just union); and Jesus prayed for such unity (John 17:20-21).

God's plan for unity included only one church, which Christ established and is head (Matthew 16:18; 28:18; Ephesians 1:21-23; 4:4). Now let us consider a very important question, "If God demands unity, then why are there so many religious organizations and denominations?" The truth is they originated with man and without the approval of God!

Just a few hundred years after the establishment of Christ's church (Day of Pentecost, AD 33; read Acts 2), there was an unauthorized departure from the truth. Paul wrote of this departure (I Timothy 4:1-3). With this departure came many unauthorized changes, such as the appointment of a "universal bishop" or "pope." In 606, Boniface III was appointed as the first official "pope," resulting in two heads of the one body, thus a mutation to the Lord's body (the church).

Many years after this departure, there were some who recognized these changes were not according to the Word of God, and sought to "reform" the Roman Catholic Church. This movement became known as the "Reformation Movement," resulting in many man-made denominations; again a mutation (having many bodies to one head). What we are advocating is not to reform a man-made church; but rather, to restore New Testament Christianity by going back to the pattern of the New Testament.

Note the difference between "reform" and "restore." To reform something means to change or alter it from its original form. To restore something, however, means you return it to its original condition. A good example of this would be restoring an antique car verses

reforming (or modifying) it. In the late 1800's, there were some who sought to "restore" the church found in the Bible. These men neither started a new religious organization or denomination, nor were they the founders of the church of Christ. They simply sought to return to New Testament Christianity. Consider the example of three ladies making a dress by the same pattern. As long as they follow the pattern, they each will have the same dress; however, if they deviate from the pattern, they will no longer have the dress as it was designed.

By following the pattern, the church of the New Testament can still be found today. It is like planting a tomato seed, no matter when or where you plant it, you will always grow tomatoes. Jesus said the Word of God was the seed (Luke 8:11); and if you plant the seed in good and honest hearts, it will always produce a New Testament Christian. A watermelon seed will never produce a tomato, nor will the doctrines of men produce a Christian (Mark 7:7)!

At the West Jefferson church of Christ, we strive for the unity for which Jesus prayed and to be the one body of which Christ is the head. We can only accomplish this by closely following the pattern of the New Testament. If you would like to study further with us from God's Word by either an in-home open Bible study or correspondence course my mail, please print & return this coupon to: Back To The Bible; 221 Barnett Street; West Jefferson, NC 28694 or visit our website @ [www.wjchurchofchrist.org](http://www.wjchurchofchrist.org).

- ☐ Yes, I am interested in a correspondence course by mail.
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