

Why The Church Isn't Ecumenical

Text : **II Tim. 4: 1-5 ; II Cor. 6: 14-18 ; II Jn. 8-11**

S#1.

S#2.

A. What does it mean to be Ecumenical ?

1. Defined as : “promoting or fostering Christian unity throughout the world”
2. Ecumenical movement : “of or relating to a movement especially among Protestant groups since the 1800s, aimed at achieving universal Christian unity and church union through international interdenominational organizations that cooperate on matters of mutual concern.” *Dictionary of Religion*

S#3.

B. The origins of the ecumenical movement.

1. Most scholars date the start of the modern ecumenical movement in 1910 and point to dramatic expansions in 1927.
2. This movement led to the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and also the United States, where the National Council of Churches of Christ which began in 1950.

C. Unity is a worthy goal and one with a scriptural basis, but ecumenism isn't it.

1. The primary goal of ecumenism is the attainment of full communion of the constituent separated churches within the movement and other ecclesiastical communities, manifest in shared events, collaboration in missions and other activities, and continued dialogue. Ecumenism ... is greatly responsible for overall attitudes espousing “unity-in-diversity” among different churches and the common appearance that all churches are essentially the same; ...”
2. While the ultimate goal of ecumenism is the unity of all its members in all matters of faith and doctrine, it is highly unlikely that such will be realized. Instead, a diversity of theological traditions is seen as acceptable, the various constituent members can work together despite significant disagreement in various matters of faith and practice, and toleration for what is perceived as the “diverse gifts of the Spirit” is mandated.

S#4.

All quotes from “*Introduction to Ecumenism*” by Jeffrey Gros

3. Unity of denominations appears to be impossible because each clings to its doctrine.

ILL : When I was a youth there was a big push to unite several churches into one. They all agreed to disagree and ignore their differences in doctrine, **but** some of all the churches refused to unite so the result was a new denomination

- a. There are between 20 and 30,000 protestant denominations in the United States.
- b. For decades the number has been growing virtually every week.
- * c. In this small town alone there are 17 different churches.

S#5.

Unity is a good thing. So why do we not participate in this movement ? This lesson will focus on why we do not participate as partners with other churches.

I. In Christ there is unity because Jesus/God has but one church.**S#6.****A. Jesus built only one church.****S#7.**

Matt. 16: 18 – I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

B. Jesus purchased only one church.**S#8.**

Acts 20: 28 – Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

C. The scriptures teach that there is only one church.**S#9.****1. The church is the body of Christ.**

Eph. 1: 22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

2. The holy scriptures teach that there is only one body, i.e., one church.**S#10.**

Eph. 4: 3-6 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

D. It is the will of Jesus that all who follow Him be united in His one body.**S#11.**

John 17: 20-21 I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **21** that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me

S#12.**II. Denominationalism and thus ecumenism is based on a false premise.****S#13.****A. Denominationalism and thus ecumenism teaches that all the different churches are co-equal parts of that one church.****S#14.****1. Money illustrated denominations.****S#15.**

a. Nickels, dimes, and quarters are denominations of a dollar.

b. A one dollar bill is a denomination of a ten or a twenty.

2. God's one church cannot be divided into many churches.**S#16.**

I Cor. 1:10-13 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same

judgment. ¹¹ For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, ^{#17.} by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

3. Christians must avoid those who divide the one church. S#18.

a. **Rom. 16: 17** – Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

b. **Titus 3: 10** – Reject a factionous man after a first and second warning,

B. Denominationalists erroneously claim that I Corinthians 12 teaches that different churches are the varying members of that one body of Christ. S#19.

1. The body of Christ is indeed made up of many varying members. S#20.

I Cor. 12: 12-15 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and ^{S#21.} we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

2. Those varying and many parts are INDIVIDUAL members, not churches. S#22.

I Cor. 12: 27 – Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

S#23.

III. Christians are commanded to separate themselves from those who teach error.

A. The Christian must not fellowship people who teach error. S#24.

1. **II John 10-11** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; ¹¹ for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

2. Those who advocate error are to receive NO indication of approval.

3. Failure to reject is paramount to participation in their error. (*Doctrine is important*)

B. This is not to say that we can have no interaction with outsiders. S#25.

1. **I Cor. 5: 9-10** I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰ I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.

2. There are more outside the church than are in the church so life necessitates contact.

3. There is a much stricter standard for religious fellowship than for daily interactions.

C. Contact and relationships are different. We may have contact, but S#26.
Christian may not have relationships with those outside of Christ. (cf- O.T. Jews)

1. **II Cor. 6: 14-16** Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what S#27.
partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship
has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial,
or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what
agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple
of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them ...

2. Individually or collectively we may not in any way be attached to outsiders.

* 3. By this we also see the standard for religious interaction is higher than daily contact.

D. Thus, we may have friends who are non-Christians, but we S#28.
may not participate in their religious activities.

1. Participation communicates tacit approval.

Rom. 1: 32 – Although they know the ordinance of God, that those who S#29.
practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do
the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

3. We are responsible to expose error.

Eph. 5:8-11 ... you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ... ¹⁰ trying
to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Do not participate in the
unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; (cf. Jude 3)

IV. Satan persuades people to demand they have their religion their own way. #30.

A. Satan uses religious teachers to advocate errors. S#31.

II Cor. 11:12-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising
themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan
disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not
surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants
of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

B. The scriptures prophesied that many would follow after Satan's teachings. #32.

1. **II Tim. 4: 3-4** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;
but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for
themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will
turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

2. **2 Tim 3: 1-5** But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. S#33.
² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, ... (*evil characteristics*
listed) ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a
form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such
men as these.

3. It appears we are living in a time when this prophecy is fulfilled.

V. It's not PC to say, but not all religions ("Christians")are going to be saved. S#34.

A. Jesus Himself said that not all who call themselves Christians will be saved. #35.

1. **Matt. 7: 21-23** Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. **22** Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" **23** And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."
2. How can a believer who preaches, cast out demons, and works miracles be lost?
3. Clearly, **Jesus** sets a higher standard than just believing in Him.
4. "**Lawless**" indicates they are not following the true doctrine. (**Not Surrendered**)
5. Jesus alone decides what the true doctrine is and who is in conformity to it.
Matt. 28: 18 – **And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,**
"All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth."

B. We are not the judge, but we must be mindful of the doctrine anyone teaches.

1. Jesus teaches that one is only His disciple as long as he follows His teachings.
John 8: 31-32 **So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him,** **S#37.**
" If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;
32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
2. The scriptures teach that one who leaves His teachings does not have God.
2 John 9 – **Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, **does not have God**; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.**

C. We must continually be examining ourselves and our doctrines. S#38.

1. **II Cor. 13: 5** – **Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!**
Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — unless indeed you fail the test?
2. Just as we keep testing ourselves, we must also test the teachings of others. **S#39.**
Acts 17: 11 – **Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.**

CONCLUSION :**S#40.****A. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that Christians cannot fellowship all churches.**

1. We must examine their teachings before we can associate with them.
2. Not all churches and not all who believe will be saved. (*regardless what they're called*)
3. If we receive those who teach error we participate in their error.
4. Satan is working within churches to lead people astray.

B. Christians are given the responsibility to be defenders of truth.**S#41.**

1. **Jude 3-4** Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. **4** For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ...
2. **Notice** : Error creeps in. It doesn't announce itself as error. **Acts 17: 11**

C. We must never join ourselves to those who teach different doctrines.**S#42.**

1. **II Cor. 6: 17** – Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "and do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. (*"Be ekklesia"*)
2. We mustn't appear to be judgmental or self-righteous as we refuse to join in the activities of other religions, but be both wise and loving as we advocate for truth. **#43.**
Col. 4: 5-6 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. **6** Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. **S#44.**
3. *Are you saying you're the only one going to Heaven ?* **S#45.**
No ! I'm just trying obey what I understand the bible to teach.

D. One obvious application : This is vacation season. When we visits those of other religions, we should NOT attend "their church", but be faithful.**S#46.**

1. **Matt. 15: 9** – But in vain do you worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.
2. Do not make it a confrontational or "holier than thou" moment.
3. Invite them. Lovingly teach them by your example. (*Buy their lunch after church.*)

**** Unity is a great thing, but it can only be accomplished on the basis of truth.****S#47.****INVITATION :** You can't lead others to a place you won't go. Are you in Christ ?**S#48.** ... *Communion Slide.*

Lesson Text :**II Timothy 4: 1-5**

4 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

II Cor. 6: 14-18

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. 17 " Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "and do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

II John 8-11

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.