

Working With Denominations!

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I'm very happy to be here tonight. I always enjoy coming to this area and participating in the Servants in Progress Seminar. I'm not sure why I get invited nor why I accept, because it always seems that you give me a hard topic with which to deal. Tonight is no exception.

The topic tonight, "Working with Denominations!," can cause a disturbance at most any preachers meeting you care to attend as well as many church board meetings and Sunday School classes. The reason is that people usually feel passionate about this subject. The reasons for the passion are many:

1. Some are passionate because they have loved ones in the denominations.
2. Some are passionate because they have come out from the denominations.
3. Some are passionate because they feel they rightly understand the Scriptures.
4. Some are passionate because they simply have strong feelings about this subject and they are not sure why.
5. Some are passionate because they may not understand the Scriptures but they dearly love people.
6. Some are passionate because they have been raised with their views.
7. Some are passionate because they have the Rodney King syndrome, "Why can't we all just get along?"
8. Some are passionate because they understand the Restoration Movement of which we are a part.
9. Some are passionate because they do not understand the

Restoration Movement of which we are a part.

10. Some are passionate because they think they understand the Restoration Movement of which we are a part.

There are questions that must be understood before one can come to an answer about working with denominations.

1. Is there such a thing as truth?
2. What is truth?
3. What does the truth say about salvation?
4. Who does truth say is a Christian?
5. Are all people who call themselves Christians, Christians?
6. Is there a Biblical example of how we are to treat those who think they are Christians, but do not measure up to the Biblical example?

Let's try dealing with these questions in the order that I have given them.

I. Is There Such a Thing as Truth?

Now right away we have a division. The reason for the division is that some say, "Of course there is such a thing as truth." Others will say, "Truth is relative. What is truth to one person is not necessarily truth to another person."

That last comment is the idea of this post-modern age in which we live. You have heard this idea expressed on TV and radio by the person who hears something and then says, "If that is what you want to believe, that's OK with me; I just don't look at it like that." In other words, "Truth is relative." A 1991 Barna poll said that 67% believe there is no such thing as absolute truth.

That is ridiculous. But it is that idea that has brought about what is called religious pluralism which simply says, "All are different roads to the same place." You can't have all roads

leading to the same place. If I had taken I-74 today rather than I-71, I can guarantee you that I would not be here tonight.

But pluralism, and especially religious pluralism, is what is being taught and experienced in our world today. That is what we saw after 9-11 in the church services that were held in Washington and New York. Everyone getting together and ignoring the fact that an elephant was in the room and no one wanted to talk about it. That is the way it is in the world, the religious world, and even in what is called, in the broadest of terms, the “Christian” world.

Francis Schaeffer said, “Modern man has both feet firmly planted in midair!”

We have been taught in the world that we are to “tolerate” everything, but is that the way that a Christian should live? Are we really to tolerate everything?

The answer to that as a Christian is a loud “NO!”

Let me give you a rule that I think is Biblical that may help all of us here, i.e., “We are to be tolerant with people, but not with God’s eternal truth!”

Let me give you an example: the woman at the well in John 4. Jesus had a conversation with her. This is not the kind of woman a man would take home to his mother. She had been married five times and was now living with another man outside of marriage. How did Jesus deal with her?

1. He was respectful of her as a person at all times. Not once did he call her names.
2. He pointed out her sin, but did not pound on it. He didn’t have to. She knew her sinfulness.
3. He directed her to the truth of Scripture and, may I say, the truth of Himself. Why? Because Jesus not only knew the truth, He was and is truth.

You see, folks, truth is not relative! Truth is not what you want to make it! Truth is reality!

Some say that there can be no such thing as truth, but I believe that a stain on a blue dress in Washington D.C. proved that wrong. Truth is reality!

2. What Is Truth?

That answers the second question we have listed. What is truth? Truth is reality.

Some would say that truth is what works. That is called pragmatism.

If something works, then it must be truth. That is the idea behind the words of the young starlet on TV who announces that she has gotten into transcendental meditation because it has brought her some peace of mind, and the interviewer will respond by saying, “Well, if it works for you, that’s good!”

No, that is wrong! It’s not what works for you. It is what is correct according to God.

When I was a child, my dad had a new garage built. I was not to go out and bug the builder, but could watch what he was doing from my bedroom window. One day the building inspector came along and I watched them get into an argument about what the builder was doing. The one thing, that I got out of the argument, besides hearing one man threaten to kill the other, was when the inspector said, “But what you are doing is not according to the code.” The builder said, “But it is just as good.” You see, the builder was saying, “It works, so it is OK.” But the inspector was going by the book, by regulations that were tried and true.

When it comes to God, we must have an absolute. That absolute cannot be feelings, or friendship, or fantasy. There must be something that is grounded.

All of truth is accepted either by experience . . . fire is hot, or by what is called the correspondence concept of truth. That is, a statement is true only if it corresponds to reality; does it exist in reality?

Here is where the Bible enters. We accept the Bible as truth. Why? Not because it works, (although it does) but because the testimony of others holds it up as truth. We have eyewitnesses who tell us that what we have before us is actual truth, actual reality. We accept the Bible, not by “blind faith,” but because of reliable testimony.

Please help me with this illustration. I will ask you the same question three times.

1. What do I have in my hand? (People guess many different things.)
2. Pick out two people in this room you trust. I would like for them to come to the front. I am going to show you (the two) what I have in my hand. Now tell the people what I have in my hand.

“A cow.”

Now what do I have in my hand? Again, there are many different answers and only a few say, “A cow.”

3. I show the plastic cow to the crowd and ask, “What do I have in my hand?” Now the audience responds with “a cow.”

I asked you three times what I had in my hand. The first time, your answer was a guess. You had no way of knowing.

The second time, you had reliable testimony.

The third time, you had knowledge. Which time was of faith? The second question was answered in faith. Some of you accepted the evidence of reliable people.

We know the truth of God because of the abundant evidence has been examined and analyzed and proven itself as truth. Jesus said, *“Thy Word is truth!”* Not just once does the Bible make that claim for itself, but over and over again. (But that is another study.)

3. What Does the Truth Say About Salvation?

Truth begins by saying, “Jesus is the only way to salvation.” Jesus said in John 14:6, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (NASU).

That is about as absolute a statement as can be made. How did He back up that statement?

He died, was buried and rose again on the third day. He backed up His statement with action. He proved that He alone could make that statement.

In Matthew 9, Mark 2, and Luke 5 is the story of a paralytic his sins. He is called blasphemous because he forgave sins. But Jesus says, *“Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven or be healed?”* The answer of the scribes and Pharisees would be to say that your sins are forgiven because no one can see that. Right? But the Bible goes on and Jesus says, *“But so that you will know . . . ”* he turns to the man and says, *“take up your bed and walk.”* In other words, He proved what He said by what He did.

Jesus has proven what He said by what He did.

So what does that mean? It means that people who look to

another for salvation are lost.

Buddhists are lost!

Taoists are lost!

Confusionists are lost!

Muslims are lost!

Seiks are lost!

Hindus are lost!

Any one who looks to another beside Jesus Christ is lost! He is the way, the truth, and the life. *“No man comes to the Father but by me!”*

Matthew 22 tells of a man who sought to go to a wedding feast without the proper garments. Instead of being dressed in the clothes that the host of the wedding provided to all the guests, this man came in dressed in his own clothes and was immediately cast out. If you try to go into the presence of God at the marriage supper of the Lamb and you are not dressed in Christ, you cannot get in. *“For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:27).

John 10:1 9, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture”* (NASU)

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? He is the door to salvation. There is no other way. And how did He prove what He said? By his miracles, yes, but even more so by His resurrection from the dead.

4. Who Then Does Truth Say Is A Christian?

In other words, how does one come to Jesus? If there is no other way to God but by Jesus, then how does a person come to Christ, how does one become a Christian?

So what does the Bible say?

A. The Bible says first of all that we are all sinners and need a Savior:

Romans 3:10 *“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one;’”* (NKJV).

Romans 3:23 *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”* (NKJV).

B. The Bible then says that we can’t save ourselves, but we are saved by God’s grace or His unmerited favor.

Ephesians 2:8 9, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”* (NASU).

Do you see what the order is? Man cannot save himself. He is in need of a Savior. Christ came to seek and save that which is lost. He came to save lost mankind. How did He do that? God has said that sin’s price must be paid. Blood must be shed. Either the blood of the guilty must atone for sin, or the blood of an innocent. Christ came and shed His blood for us. He died on the cross to save us from our sins.

Isaiah 64:6, *“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away”* (NASU).

Man had sinned. He could not save Himself. He needed a Savior.

Paul says in Galatians 4:4-5, *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (KJV).

This takes us back to that Ephesian passage: Ephesians 2:8 9, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”* (NASU).

We weren't worthy of salvation. We couldn't be good enough for salvation. We couldn't buy our salvation. But God offers salvation to mankind through His Son Jesus. Salvation is by grace. It is unmerited and a free gift.

God doesn't throw salvation around like the rain or the snow and whoever it hits is saved. That Ephesian passage says that we are saved by grace through faith.

Man has a part in his own salvation. God will never force anyone to be saved. He will not force someone to accept His free gift, but He will offer it to man and if man wants this free gift, he has to accept it, how? by faith.

I've never seen heaven, but I have faith that it exists.

When I have dirty hands I can pick up soap and wash the dirt away, but I can't see that my sins have been taken away. That must be done by faith. I must accept God at His Word and if He says it, then I must accept it.

I must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

What is faith? Faith is the acceptance of reliable testimony. Remember the cow I had in my hand? Reliable testimony. God said that if I accept His son by faith, my sins will be taken away.

Can God be trusted? Of course; He is truth. He will not lie. In fact, He cannot lie! Titus 1:2 says that God cannot lie.

The best known Bible verse in all the world says, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16 NKJV).

Belief is an action that we must take. I cannot make you believe what you do not want to believe.

Let me ask you, “How long did it take you to really believe that the World Trade Center had been destroyed by an airplane flying into it?” I was glued to that TV and watched it over and over again. It was hard to believe even though I saw it. Why? Because I didn’t want to believe it.

If you do not want to believe in Christ, there is nothing that can make you believe in Christ. But before you decide that, please make sure that you have checked the evidence.

We have just moved into a new building. I met with the telephone installation man one day. He is a nice, very personable young man from England with a delightful accent. He said to me, “What does the Christian Restoration Association do?” I get that question a lot.

After I told him about the CRA, I said, “Where do you go to church?” I was trying to find where he is on his spiritual journey so I could help direct him if he needed help. His answer really

surprised me. He said, "I am an atheist." I said, "Really?" He talked some more and then I said, "Have you examined the evidence?" I knew from what he had said that he hadn't. We talked for another 15 minutes. I saw him a few days later and gave him a book that examines the evidence and asked him to read it. I will keep in touch and keep talking to him. But I tell that to you to say how foolish it is to not believe in Christ if you haven't examined the evidence concerning Him. (But that is, again, another study).

To accept Christ we must believe in Him, but thinking something in the mind is not enough. The Bible Word for believe also means to trust. We must trust Christ enough to be obedient to Him.

This is where baptism enters the picture. We are saved By Grace, Through Faith, but it is At Baptism where salvation takes place.

Acts 2:38 39, "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (NKJV).

1 Peter 3:21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (KJV).

Galatians 3:27, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

I would hope that in a crowd like this I wouldn't have to point that out. But I am finding as I travel around the country that in many places our people no longer know the basics.

It's at the waters of baptism where our sins are washed away. There is nothing miraculous about the water, but in obedience

to what Christ has said in His Word, we follow Him. Christ shed His blood at His death. Where do we come in contact with the blood? When we are buried with Him in baptism!

Paul said, Romans 6:3 5, *“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,”* (NASU).

We are saved by grace, through faith, at baptism, for good works.

Again the Ephesian passage: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:8-10 NASU).

We are not saved by good works, but for good works. In other words we have been saved to be the hands and feet and mouth of Christ Jesus in this world. Annie Johnson Flints old words are still as true today as when we first heard them:

“Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way;
He has no lips but our lips
To tell men how He died
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.”

So who then is a Christian? That is the important question. A

Christian is a believer in Christ who has been placed in Christ by his faith in Christ as shown by his baptism into Christ.

Let me footnote here; I have not said anything about repentance because baptism without repentance and faith is not baptism at all, it is simply taking a bath.

(Part Two)

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5. Are All People Who Call Themselves Christians, Christians?

I like the story that Chuck Doughty told in the recent debate on “perfectionism” held in Columbus. He told about the guy in the insane asylum who walked around telling people he was Napoleon. Everywhere he went, he said, “I am Napoleon.” Someone once asked him, “How do you know that you are Napoleon?” His answer was, “God told me.” Right then someone in the corner chimed in and said, “No, I didn’t.”

I am saying just because someone calls himself a Christian does not make him one. I can call myself an airline pilot, but that doesn’t mean that I know how to fly a plane. I’ve never taken a lesson. I know not one thing about flying. It would be ludicrous for me to say that I am a pilot because I have not followed the prescription for becoming a pilot.

I had a youth minister working with me one time who thought more highly of himself than he should have. We were having a revival meeting with Don DeWelt and I heard the boy, this college student say, “Don, I understand you are a writer. I am, too!” He had had a couple of articles printed at that time. Later I heard him say to a prospect, “So you are a guitarist. I am too!” That very week he had just taken his first guitar lesson. There are certain minimal things that must be done to wear a title.

The same thing can be said about almost everything in the world. There is a universally accepted prescription that is followed to become something. A pilot, doctor, dentist, engineer, policeman, fire fighter, farmer, lathe operator, teacher, writer, musician, you name it. There are things that need to be done before one can rightfully call himself that.

This is also true when it comes to being called a Christian. There is a standard. The Bible is truth and it is the only thing that can tell us what we need to do to wear the name Christian correctly.

Now this is foundational! I have said all of that to lay a ground work for the question of this evening: “Working with Denominations!” Can we work with denominations? How can we work with denominations?

1. What is a denomination?

Webster defines denomination as 1. An act of naming; 2. a name; 3. the name of a class of things; 4. a class or kind; 5. a religious sect.

There is a book that comes out every so often called the *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*. It used to be put out by Frank Mead and now is updated by Samuel S. Hill. Hill defines denomination as “a catchall term that is a label for the wide-ranging treatment of religious bodies.”

Basically, a denomination is a religious group that has called itself by a certain name to distinguish itself from all others. I am not trying to be nasty or mean, and in fact, I say this with all the love that I can muster, does a Baptist want to be called a Methodist? Does a Methodist want to be called a Presbyterian? Does a Presbyterian want to be called a Lutheran? I think you get the idea.

Denominations are groups that have called themselves by certain names to distinguish themselves from others. Why? Because of what they believe. You see they don't all believe the same thing. Every one of the denominations has something that it holds to be different from the others and thus wants to be separated from them. What are some of those dividing things?

The denominational world (and I am painting with a very big brush because there are so many different denominations that we can't get into details about them all) will deny much of what we believe. There are groups out there who do not believe in the deity of Christ. There are groups out there who do not hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. There are groups out there who do not believe in the Trinity. There are groups out there who do not accept the Biblical plan of salvation.

I will only deal with one of those things and that is salvation.

The denominational world will say that we are saved by faith alone – that all a person has to have to be saved is just have faith. They will say that anything other than faith is a work. They will say that baptism is a work and not necessary for salvation. But friends, that just isn't true. And I hope you have already seen that, but in case you haven't, let me say that only one time in all of Scripture can you find the words "*faith*" and "*alone*" together and that is in James 2:24 "*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*"

The denominational world calls baptism a work, but it isn't. The only one who works in baptism is God, because it is in baptism that God does His work of cleansing us from our sins. You cannot baptize yourself. You can only submit to baptism, therefore, baptism cannot be a work.

So we are divided from "them," "them" being the denominations. By the way, aren't we a denomination? No! Not at all. We are not a denomination because we have none of the trappings

of a denomination. We don't have an earthly headquarters. We don't have an earthly name. We don't have an earthly hierarchy. We don't have an earthly message.

To the contrary, we have a headquarters in heaven. There is nothing over the local congregation but God and His Word. We have a heavenly name, Christian. That is not man-made, but I think a God-breathed name (Acts 11:26...word for "*called*" is only used of a divine calling). There is no hierarchy in the church, but each congregation is guided by an evangelist and elders. There is no message that we have made up, but simply preach the Word of God.

So we are divided from the rest of the religious world, but we are not the dividing agents. The dividing agents are the manmade names, creeds, and books. These are the things that are dividing what is broadly called Christianity.

Again, back to the original question, Can we work with denominations?

My answer is "YES" and "NO."

1. In matters of salvation, I have to give as my opinion a "NO" answer. Why? Why can't, or shouldn't, we work, let's say, in a Billy Graham Crusade. (I use Billy Graham as an example here, but he is not the only one. There are many other preachers and causes out there to whom this applies.) The reason is easy. The message that is preached gives the wrong answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" It is Billy's crusade and Billy's sermon and Billy's invitation and Billy's answer to the question of salvation, but it is the wrong answer. His answer is to pray "the sinner's prayer" and then you are saved. This is so contrary to Scripture that it isn't even funny, but it is the answer that so many of the denominations agree upon.

Have you ever read the statement of faith from the Billy Graham

organization?

Statement of Faith of the Billy Graham Association

- *The Bible to be the infallible Word of God, that it is His holy and inspired Word, and that it is of supreme and final authority.*
- *In one God, eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*
- *Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He led a sinless life, took on Himself all our sins, died and rose again, and is seated at the right hand of the Father as our mediator and advocate.*
- *That all people everywhere are lost and face the judgment of God, and need to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through His shed blood on the cross.*
- *That Christ rose from the dead and is coming soon.*
- *In holy Christian living, and that we must have concern for the hurts and social needs of our fellowmen.*
- *We must dedicate ourselves anew to the service of our Lord and to His authority over our lives.*
- *In using every modern means of communication available to us to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.*

We can agree with that, but Billy Graham goes on. From his web site in dealing with acceptance of Christ there are about 10 pages. Just part of it says:

“So how do you turn toward God?

- 1. Admit your spiritual need. Admit you are a sinner.*
- 2. Believe that Jesus Christ died for YOU on the cross.*
- 3. Receive Jesus Christ into your heart and life, by choosing this relationship over your current life of sin and separation from Him.*
- 4. Repent and be willing to turn from your sin.*

The Bible says:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12, NKJV)

You can belong to God from today on if you will tell Him with all your heart. Your prayer should be your own, from your own heart where you are. Here is a sample of what you might say to God:

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I was made for You, but I've been living for me. I want to begin a relationship with You now. I believe that You died in my place, to pay the penalty for my sin, and rose again for my salvation. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite You to come into my heart and life as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name....

If you say (or pray) words like these and mean them with your whole heart, take the ...

*You prayed, committing your life to Christ. What happens now?
First know:*

You are a child of God -- The Bible says: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12, KJV).

You have everlasting life -- The Bible says: "For God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, KJV).

Second, if you're comfortable, let us know of your decision. We would like to send helpful information about beginning your new life with Christ.

Third, get a Bible and read the book of John to start. We have a Bible Study online to help you.

Fourth, start talking to God every day. He wants to hear from you and walk with you through your life.

Fifth, make some new friends. The difficulties of living as a

Christian in a sinful world are many. Find some Bible-believing Christians to help you sustain your resolve. Both individual Christian friends and a solid, Bible-based Christian church are essential for you to get to know God better.

Sixth, tell someone else -- Take a risk and share (even today) your decision to follow Christ. Someone you care about needs to hear this Good News."

I would hope that all of us here tonight are against physical abortion. May I say that the answer Billy Graham and his friends give to the question of salvation is "spiritual abortion."

But let me tell you, 10,000 Greeks can be wrong. 10,000 denominations can be wrong. 10,000 times 10,000 preachers can be wrong, but God's Word can't be wrong. Peter still said, "*Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

The city of Cincinnati is gearing up for a Billy Graham crusade even as we speak. I am surprised and greatly disheartened by what I have read in the advertising. What I have seen is congregation after congregation of Churches of Christ/Christian churches actively participating. They are giving their name, giving their stamp of approval to the messages that will be proclaimed. They are giving an impression to the world that our churches are just one of the bunch and one of the many roads that lead to heaven. I have a great deal of trouble adding the name of Christ to a message that is not of Christ.

2. But can Christians take part in things like this?

When I first came back to Ohio, Billy Graham was scheduled to hold a crusade in Cincinnati that summer ('77). The elders of the Madeira church wrote me and asked my opinion. I gave them basically what I have just said. They then went to the congregation and said this: "The Madeira Church of Christ will not be taking

part in the coming Billy Graham Crusade. We will not be adding our name to those participating, but if any member on his own wishes to take part or attend, that is up to him.”

I could not take part, nor would I attend. I wouldn't want someone to see me there and assume that I was giving my agreement to the message that is preached, but on the other hand there are some who feel they can go and even sign up as counselors and thus give people the real plan of salvation. To those people I say, “God bless you, but I think you are swimming upstream.” You may have the purest of motives, but I doubt seriously that you will be able to bring your plan to fruition.

3. How about matters that are not involving salvation?

Can we work with the denominations in those areas? Let me say this. If we want to abolish abortion, we will have to work with Catholics. If we want to have creation taught in public schools, we will have to work with Baptists, and others.

So yes, there are areas where I think we can work with them as long as we do not have to compromise on God's Word.

You do some of this already. In fact, if someone should say that it is always wrong to work with denominations (meaning people who belong to them) then you will probably have to quit your job because you already working with denominationalists all the time.

In my Madeira ministry there arose a problem in our school system. We had some school board members who wanted our schools to go to the year-round system. I didn't like the sound of that because I thought that would hurt the church, including the church camp. I went to a school board meeting to find out more about what was going on and ended up in a group that fought year-round schools and won. I found myself working alongside many people of many persuasions. In fact, one man has become a friend.

He is as liberal as I am conservative. He is a leader in the Cincinnati Jewish community. We respect each other. We are friendly toward each other. But my friendship with him is for the purpose of winning him to Christ.

Another person I met during the same time was a Jewish lawyer. We have had wonderful talks. In fact, once we saw each other at the dry cleaners and began a talk that ended up standing outside, behind my car with my Bible open on the trunk lid. Our positions are so opposed to each other, but he said, "I like to talk with you." And I said to him, "I like talking with you." My goal is to win them to Christ.

When I was here once before I spoke on Christian unity. At that time I shared a quote from Jack Cottrell that has really helped me in my relationships with people of other faiths. Jack said, "There is a difference between brotherly fellowship and redemptive friendship."

"Redemptive friendship" is a friendship that seeks to redeem that person, to bring them to a faith in Christ.

"Brotherly fellowship" is a bond that only those in Christ can have. It is a bond in which people are held together by their mutual faith in Christ.

When I start treating someone in a denomination as a brother in Christ, then the problem I have is that I will no longer try to win him to Christ. We don't try to win those who we think are already won. Once brotherly fellowship begins, then redemptive friendship ends.

6. Is There a Biblical Example of How We Are To Treat Those Who Think They Are Christians, But Do Not Measure Up To The Biblical Example?

Yes, there is. Acts 18:24-28

“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord;”

[Don't you know some good people who are in some of the denominational churches who know about Christ and love the Lord?]

“and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.”

[I know some wonderful people who know God's Word and have a beautiful spirit and fervor for the Lord, but don't know the entire way as yet]

“So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

[Notice how they did that? They took him aside and explained the Word of God more accurately to him. They didn't skin his hide or try to win an argument. Oh, how well I remember being in high school and attending the Bible club in our school that was run by the Youth for Christ organization and how I would argue about things with them all the time. I didn't win any of them. In fact, my attitude probably turned many of them off from listening to anything good that I might have had to say.]

“And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (NKJV).

That is the way it should be done. We are to befriend people and teach them patiently the way of God more accurately. When I was in my Madeira ministry we had a very, very,

friendly man come to church one Sunday. He introduced himself as Sam Jackson. He said, "I'm a Presbyterian lay preacher and since my church just about closes during the summer, I decided to visit around and see what the other churches are doing."

I welcomed Sam with open arms. Not as a Christian brother, but as a friend who needed to know more about God. I worked with Sam all summer. At the end of summer I baptized that laypreacher/school principal on a Sunday morning, had him preach on Sunday evening and then helped him enroll at CBC on Monday to go even deeper into the word. When he died, he was preaching at a small Christian church in Georgia.

I think that account of Apollos is in Acts to tell us that there are more Apollos out there who love the Lord, but need to know Him and His Word better. I'm sorry that I hadn't learned that lesson when I was in high school because maybe I could have won some of my friends if my attitude had been better.

I don't think that our people are the only ones who love the Lord, nor do I think that we are the world's only Christians. But please note that I am not saying that denominations are Christian. I know people in denominations who dearly love the Lord, but have been imperfectly taught in how to keep His commandments. I believe, because I have met those people, that there are many in denominational churches who love the Lord, but need more training.

I also believe that there are some in the denominational world who are Christians, who have followed the Scriptural way of accepting Christ. Because of their faith they repented and were immersed into Christ for the remission of sins, but for one reason or the other are in denominational churches.

So what should we do? Should we ignore the fact when we are with them that there is an elephant in the room? Or should we talk about the elephant? Honesty says, "Lets talk about the elephant."

Alexander Campbell said (in several places in his writings) “I have no idea of seeing, nor wish to see, the sects unite in one grand army. This would be dangerous to our liberties and laws. For this the Savior did not pray. It is only the disciples dispersed among them that reason and benevolence would call out of them.”

Campbell is expressing what should be the desire of every Christian to call other Christians out of the denominational world. Why?

1. Denominationalism exalts men rather than Christ. (They wear other names.)
2. Denominationalism exalts books over the Bible. (They will say that their books simply contain God’s Word, but if it is more than God’s Word it is too much. If it is less than God’s Word, it is not enough. If it is the same as God’s Word, then it is superfluous.)
3. Denominationalism goes against the prayer of Jesus and the program of Jesus.

Jesus prayed that the world would be one so that the world could be won. Our divisiveness does nothing to bring people to Christ. Our standoffishness does nothing to win people to Christ.

We must at all times keep the goal in mind that Christ gave us when He said that we are to go and make disciples. Some that we meet may start out as atheists. Love them, teach them, be patient with them and try to win them.

Others may start out without a negative mark on them, say a child from a Christian home, raised to know the Lord and call upon him. (That was my experience.) That child needs to be taken and taught about Christ until it is a natural progression of his life to accept Christ as His Lord.

Others may have been caught in the denominational web and may need to be untaught first before they can be taught the way of the

Lord more perfectly. (That was my dad's experience.)

Where people come from, where they start, or where they are when we find them, is not nearly so important as where they are when we leave them.

Our task is still to Win the Whole World to Christ!

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