

THE ONLY WAY OUT OF DENOMINATIONAL CONFUSION

Introduction:

1. Many people look at the chaos of denominationalism and respond with confusion, frustration, or discouragement. They see thousands of churches teaching contradictory doctrines and assume that Christianity itself must be divided or uncertain. Yet Scripture teaches that God is not the author of this confusion, and therefore the problem must lie elsewhere (**1 Corinthians 14:33**).
2. Others respond by lowering the bar of discipleship. They insist that sincerity is enough, that as long as a person “believes in Jesus,” the details do not matter. But Jesus and His apostles taught the opposite — that truth matters, doctrine matters, and obedience matters (**John 8:31; Matthew 28:20**).
3. Still others respond by searching for an institution that appears united and authoritative. Some turn to the Catholic Church; others turn to modern cults. But human institutions cannot supply what only Scripture provides (**Mark 7:7–8; 1 Timothy 4:1–3**).
4. A fourth and better response exists: seeking the truth honestly, humbly, and directly from God’s Word. This outline examines these four reactions and shows the biblical path that leads out of confusion.

1. Walking Away In Disillusionment (**1 Corinthians 14:33**):

- a. Many people see denominational confusion and assume Christianity itself has failed, concluding that the Bible must be unclear or unreliable. But Paul teaches that God is not the author of confusion, meaning doctrinal chaos cannot come from Him. When people walk away, they mistakenly blame God for what men have created through their departure from Scripture.
- b. Scripture consistently reveals that division arises when people cease to continue in the word of Christ and begin to follow tradition, opinion, or preference (**John 8:31**). Leaving the faith because of human error does not resolve the problem but abandons the only true solution.
- c. Disillusionment overlooks the evidence that God preserves a faithful remnant who cling to His Word despite surrounding confusion (**Romans 11:4–5**). Instead of walking away, the answer is to return to Scripture and trust God rather than human institutions.

2. Willful Ignorance — “One Church Is As Good As Another” (**Proverbs 14:12**):

- a. Some reduce all doctrinal differences to insignificance, claiming that sincerity alone makes worship acceptable. But Proverbs warns that a way may seem right to a man and yet lead to death. Sincerity without truth cannot lead to salvation, because sincerity cannot transform error into righteousness.
- b. Jesus calls His disciples to abide in His teaching and to obey all things He commanded (**Matthew 28:20**). Willful ignorance refuses this responsibility by pretending that obedience is optional. But discipleship requires submitting to Christ’s revealed will, not redefining it.
- c. Paul warns that even an angel from heaven would be accursed if he preached a different gospel (**Galatians 1:8–9**). This makes clear that doctrine matters and that God expects His people to distinguish truth from error rather than lump all churches together.

3. Reducing Christianity To Faith And Sincerity Alone (**Ephesians 4:4–5**):

- a. Many respond to confusion by boiling Christianity down to two concepts: believe in Jesus and be sincere. But Paul affirms that there is “one body... one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” meaning that God Himself has defined the faith, and it cannot be remade according to personal preference.
- b. Jesus declared that His words will judge every person on the last day (**John 12:48**). If sincerity alone were sufficient, judgment would be unnecessary; instead, Jesus roots salvation in adherence to His revealed truth.
- c. Peter affirms that God’s Word is the enduring, unchanging standard by which all believers are sanctified (**1 Peter 1:23–25**). Reducing Christianity to sincerity alone removes the authority of Scripture and replaces it with human feeling.

4. Seeking Truth Instead Of Settling For Confusion (John 17:17):

- a. Some refuse to walk away, refuse to ignore contradictions, and refuse to oversimplify Christianity. They instead ask the essential question: "If confusion is not from God, where can I find the truth?" Jesus answered this plainly — truth is found in the Word of God.
- b. When seekers reach this moment of clarity, they must choose a source of authority. Many are drawn toward religious institutions that claim ancient authority or visible unity, such as the Catholic Church. But age, hierarchy, and size cannot substitute for Scripture (Jeremiah 6:16).
- c. Others turn to groups like Jehovah's Witnesses or Latter-day Saints, attracted by external unity. Yet unity built on false doctrine is still false unity (1 Timothy 4:1-3). The only reliable path forward is Scripture alone, which is inspired, complete, and sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

5. Practical Guidance For The Sincere Seeker (Acts 17:11):

- a. Begin with the words of Jesus in the Gospels. Start where the faith begins and carefully observe what Christ teaches about discipleship, salvation, obedience, and worship. Let the words of the Lord shape your understanding rather than cultural assumptions or denominational traditions.
- b. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Avoid building doctrine on isolated verses. Compare passages, trace themes, and allow clearer statements to explain more difficult ones. This is the Berean attitude God commands.
- c. Study the book of Acts to see how the gospel was preached and obeyed. Acts reveals how people were converted, how churches were organized, and how Christians worshiped. It provides a living blueprint for following Christ faithfully today.
- d. Test every church, doctrine, and practice by Scripture. Do not test by feelings, popularity, or tradition. God calls His people to examine everything in the light of His Word (Acts 17:11).
- e. Pray for honesty and courage. The greatest barrier to truth is not ignorance but unwillingness. Ask God for a heart that loves truth more than comfort and values obedience above convenience (Psalm 139:23-24).

Conclusion:

1. Denominational confusion is real, but it is not a sign that God failed or that truth has been lost. Scripture assures us that God is not the source of confusion; therefore the chaos we see is the result of human departure from His revealed Word. The path forward is not despair but returning to God's authoritative voice through Scripture.
2. The popular reactions — disillusionment, willful ignorance, or reducing Christianity to mere sincerity — do not solve the problem. They only deepen the confusion. But for the person who refuses shallow answers, who seeks truth rather than convenience, and who is willing to examine Scripture honestly, clarity begins to emerge. God has always preserved a clear and simple path for those who want to find it.
3. Truth still exists, unity is still possible, and God can still be known. The solution is not to search endlessly among human institutions but to open the Bible, let God speak, and follow what He reveals. The problem has never been that God hid the truth — only that people often search everywhere except where He has spoken.

Applications:

1. Christians must renew their confidence in Scripture as the only reliable guide. Instead of being intimidated by denominational confusion, we should recommit ourselves to studying the Bible daily, knowing that God has provided all things necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). This will strengthen our faith and protect us from error.
2. We must cultivate discernment when evaluating churches, teachings, or religious claims. Feelings, tradition, or reputation cannot determine truth. Only Scripture can. This means we should test modern worship practices, doctrines, and church structures by God's Word, refusing anything that contradicts His revealed will (Acts 17:11).

3. We should encourage others who are confused by denominationalism. Many people sincerely want the truth but do not know where to begin. By pointing them to Scripture, offering to study with them, and showing patience, we participate in leading souls out of confusion and into the light of God's Word (**James 5:19–20**).
4. Each Christian must examine personal beliefs and practices to ensure they come from Scripture rather than tradition or habit. This requires humility, honesty, and courage, for God calls His people to obey Him in all things, not merely in what is comfortable or familiar (**John 12:48**).

Questions:

1. Why does Paul say God is not the author of confusion, and what does this imply about denominationalism (**1 Corinthians 14:33**)?
2. Why is sincerity not a sufficient basis for determining truth (**Proverbs 14:12**)?
3. What does Jesus require of His disciples regarding doctrine and obedience (**Matthew 28:20**)?
4. Why are human institutions, whether ancient or unified, not reliable sources of divine truth (**Mark 7:7–8**)?
5. What does the example of the Bereans teach sincere seekers about how to find truth (**Acts 17:11**)?

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Questions & Answers:

1. Why does Paul say God is not the author of confusion, and what does this imply about denominationalism (**1 Corinthians 14:33**)?

Answer: God produces unity and peace through His Word, so the confusion of denominationalism must come from human departure from Scripture (**1 Corinthians 14:33**).

2. Why is sincerity not a sufficient basis for determining truth (**Proverbs 14:12**)?

Answer: Sincerity cannot change error into truth, because a way may seem right to a person and yet lead to destruction (**Proverbs 14:12**).

3. What does Jesus require of His disciples regarding doctrine and obedience (**Matthew 28:20**)?

Answer: Jesus requires His followers to observe all things He commanded, making doctrine essential to genuine discipleship (**Matthew 28:20**).

4. Why are human institutions, whether ancient or unified, not reliable sources of divine truth (**Mark 7:7–8**)?

Answer: Human institutions often elevate tradition above God's Word, rendering worship vain and leading people away from divine authority (**Mark 7:7–8**).

5. What does the example of the Bereans teach sincere seekers about how to find truth (**Acts 17:11**)?

Answer: The Bereans examined Scripture daily to verify every claim, showing that truth is found by testing all teachings by God's Word (**Acts 17:11**).