

God's Simple Solution to Religious Confusion

INTRODUCTION:

1. "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33), and yet we have a lot of it in the religious world (many different churches, many different doctrines, etc.). We can all see that, right?
2. If God is not responsible, who is? We all know the answer to that question. Confusion reigns because MEN insist on tinkering with God's perfect plan.
3. People are confused when they see so many different "options," and in the midst of this confusion, they are asking a number of questions.
 - a. All these different churches—Episcopalian, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, etc.—which one do I choose? They all seem to be teaching something different, so do I just pick the one where I feel most comfortable? Do I just look for the friendliest group?
 - b. And if I do choose one, how active do I have to be? Do I have to be there for the assemblies? I know some folks who go regularly, but I know other "religious" people who don't see the need.
 - c. Am I even required to join a church? Does God even care about any sort of "organized religion"?
4. The only way I know to cut through the confusion is to go back to "what you heard from the beginning" (1 John 2:24), back to God's simple plan in the New Testament, and then follow it very carefully.
5. So let's go back to the beginning, pick out a disciple of Jesus, and see what he did under the instruction of the apostles. That will tell us, then, what we still need to do today.
6. We'll use Crispus, a man we first read about in Acts 18. Here are the three points we want to observe about Crispus, points we will develop more fully in the remainder of the lesson.
 - a. Crispus became a member of THE church, the ONE church Jesus promised to build.
 - b. Crispus joined a local church, of which there were MANY.
 - c. Assuming Crispus remained faithful, whenever that local church assembled, he was "in church."

Keep this three point outline in your head, and also observe the three different uses of the word "church," all of which will be important to our study.

BODY:

- A. Crispus became a member of THE church.
 1. To establish this point, let's begin with where we should begin—his conversion to Christ, his salvation.
 - a. Acts 18:7-8: “many of the Corinthians (including Crispus), hearing, believed and were baptized.”
 2. When Crispus was saved from his sins, he was added to this one church or one body; because according to Ephesians 5:23, this one body is composed of all the saved. Yes, Crispus was first “joined to the Lord,” to use a phrase from 1 Cor. 6:17, but now that's he joined to the Lord, he's joined together with everyone else who's done the same.
 - a. Think about what a marvelous blessing this is, to be in the same fellowship with the saved all over the world, and not just those alive today, but also those who died in the Lord.
 3. To further confirm what we're saying here, 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”
 4. Clearly then, Crispus became a member of this body or church (Ephesians 1:22-23) when he was baptized for the remission of his sins.
 5. He was not a Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, etc.—he was simply a Christian, included now in a great fellowship with other Christians.
- B. Crispus joined a local church, of which there were many.
 1. Which one? “The church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2)—that's how the first letter to this church is addressed, and Crispus is mentioned as one of its members (1 Cor. 1:14).
 - a. Please note that local churches, like the one at Corinth, were sometimes described as “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16), and by other expressions which in general denoted their relationship to the Father and the Son.
 2. Now, how would we describe his religious affiliation? Crispus was still simply a Christian, but he was now “joined together” (1 Cor. 1:10) with other Christians from Corinth in a local church, to work and worship together with them.
 - a. Here's Paul's plea to that local church: “Now I plead with you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).
 3. Think with me about the only way they could accomplish this unity. The church at Corinth was taught ONE doctrine, the doctrine of Christ, or “the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). Only by following this ONE doctrine could they “speak the

same thing” and “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

4. The fact is, in the “beginning,” every local church was taught the same doctrine (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17).
 5. Some began to deviate from that doctrine, including the church at Corinth, but when they did, they were rebuked for it (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:17-34).
 6. Bottom line—Crispus joined a local church built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, and they were expected to keep it that way (1 Cor. 3:10-11).
- C. Assuming Crispus remained faithful, whenever the church at Corinth assembled, he was “in church.”
1. The church at Corinth did assemble, or “come together in one place” (1 Cor. 5:4; 11:17-18, 20). Note especially 1 Cor. 14:23—“the whole church comes together in one place”).
 2. When one was present in this assembly, he was said to be “in church” (1 Cor. 14:28, 34-35).
 3. The primary day of assembly was the “first day of the week” (1 Cor. 16:2), and when they were “in church” on this day, they sang and prayed together (1 Cor. 14:14-15), ate the Lord’s Supper together (1 Cor. 11:17-34), studied God’s word together (1 Cor. 14:26), and gave for the Lord’s work (1 Cor. 16:1-2). These activities were to be done “decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40), and in such a way that everyone was edified (1 Cor. 14:26).
 4. It most certainly DID matter **what** they did when they came together, and **how** they did it, which explains the warning found in 1 Cor. 11:34: “lest you come together for judgment.”

CONCLUSION:

1. It’s really pretty simple, when you go back to the beginning of the gospel.
 - a. Like Crispus, you need to become a Christian—be saved from your sins, and in so doing become a member of the ONE church Jesus built.
 - b. Like Crispus, you need to join a local church, one without any denominational affiliation, one which follows only the teachings of Christ and intends to keep it that way.
 - c. Like Crispus and the other brethren in Corinth, whenever this local church assembles or “comes together in one place,” you need to be present or “in church.”
2. “Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father” (1 John 2:24).