

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship
August 22, 2021
“Big Ideas”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Carolynn’s Baby Shower after church today

Church Camp last day for T-Shirts & Signup

Wednesday Nights at Alêtheia begin soon - get ready - answer the survey...

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Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com

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A chapter of “Hindrances to Church Unity.”

1) Personal pride (2:1-11)

A) Don’t cause offence.

B) Confess if you do.

C) Forgive.

2) Church leadership (2:12-14)

3) Materialism (2:15-17)

4) Wrong ideas (2:18-27)

I JOHN 2:18-27 ~

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Every positive and every negative trend you see in our society today started out as a philosopher's _____. _____ are so important, but no _____ more so than the one that claims that Almighty God has spoken to us in an intelligible way.

Truth with a capital "T" is _____ and _____ Truth.

Only one thing matters: _____. Any person wanting to spend eternity in the Biblical Heaven must be a Christian and all there is to Christianity and being a Christian is _____. Everything else matters to the degree that it affects that.

Predicates...

Implications...

Ramifications...

Apostle's Creed...

Nicene Creed of 325 A.D...

Athanasian Creed...

Guard your belief from distortion by Satan and his agents.

To have proper Christian _____ in the church universal we need to discern which people are the church. We can think of ideas in a hierarchy.

Now we draw a line under the _____ idea that is essential.

The problem with _____ the line ideas is that you can easily push them _____ the line.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

*Welcome
Friends*



John

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship



You can think of chapter 2 as “Hindrances to Church Unity.”



1) First, we had the hinderance of pride. In verses 1 through 11 we were told to get over ourselves. That means that if you're going to have church unity, which is the proof of Christians obeying the Lord's command to "Love one another," you must have people who put aside their pride. For there to be a Body of Christ on earth, Jesus must have a group of dudes and dudettes who, for His sake, think about the other person.

A) That others-concern takes the form of working diligently not to be a stumbling block to them by not giving offence to them. To whom? To the people in your local church, primarily. This is what Jesus demands.

An immunocompromised and so, unvaccinated person in a local church asks her church family to mask up during services to protect her health. What should her brothers and sisters in Christ do? One way to have unity with her would be to kick her out of the church. We could be more subtle about it of course. We could simply refuse her request and deride mask wearers as weak people driven by fear rather than by faith. I'm certain that she would become uncomfortable enough that she'd leave on her own - problem solved - church unity achieved with nary a mask in sight.

B) The next way we get over ourselves is being others-aware enough to discern when we've failed and sinned by offending another. Notice that it doesn't matter if we think it was offensive, just that the brother or sister does. Once aware of the issue, we push our pride down enough to confess our sin to them. Admission, apology, request for forgiveness, and repentance.

C) On the other side of the equation, we are humble enough not to take offense at every opportunity, for the good of the Body. If you are constantly being offended, you're either associating with an ogre, or you're far too sensitive. If we are offended, we are others-concerned enough to quickly forgive and forget when sincerely asked. Beyond that, we forgive and set appropriate boundaries when repentance is absent.

It is a monumental hindrance to church unity when we all come in here focused on all the cares and concerns of the personal, to the detriment of the group. Let's put aside our pride for the good of the whole because that's what pleases Jesus.



2) Second, in verses 12-14 we have the hindrance of organizational dynamics within the group, specifically, church leadership. A group of people always has an organization whether official or unofficial, whether recognized or not - trust me, any human group will organize itself, absent a formal structure.

People, especially in our culture today, chafe against leadership. We don't like authority over us, telling us what to do, judging our ability to do it and disciplining us when we fail - we don't like that. The New Testament, the Didache, all the evidence of early

Christianity confirm that Jesus' church followed the form of the Jewish synagogues of His day.

Each local community of Believers would have an Overseer teaching and preaching, Elders leading, Deacons serving and people learning, fellowshiping, encouraging, loving. Each of those groups and groups within those groups would all submit to one another as appropriate. Read what Peter has to say about it in his first epistle - especially chapter 5. "I exhort the elders... Shepherd the flock... According to the will of God." "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another."

In Ephesians 5:21, the Apostle Paul told the church, "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." Yes, in the fear of Christ Jesus the Holy Word of Almighty God - it's His church we cavalierly dismiss, and disparage and disrupt. Be careful how you treat the His Bride.



3) Third, in verses 15-17 we have the hindrance of materialism, which is the natural state of affairs for the human person. Only a very few break out of the pursuit for the mundane physical concerns of life and think beyond. Yet, every Christian should be in that group. What I'm saying is that to be a non-Christian philosopher, or a deeply spiritual person is rare because there's no indwelling Holy Spirit to push them, but all Christians have been shown the Light.

Stop living life like an evolved animal and live life like a Child of the Living God.

It is a monumental hindrance to church unity when we all come in here focused on all the cares and concerns of the physical, to the detriment of the real. The real that God has opened our eyes to see and our minds to understand and our hearts to experience.

Stop worrying about the things that mere mortals worry about and focus on Jesus... What does Jesus want of you right now this very moment? What does He want?



4) Now, we get to the fourth hindrance to church unity... Wrong ideas.



I John 2:18-27, 18Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 19They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 20But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 21I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

23Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

24As for you, 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. 25This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. 26These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 27As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

“IDEAS ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN GUNS. WE WOULD NOT LET OUR ENEMIES HAVE GUNS, WHY SHOULD WE LET THEM HAVE IDEAS.” - JOSEPH STALIN



I can't begin to stress enough how powerful ideas really are. Most people have little use for philosophy and assume that the ideas philosophers argue about have no real place in everyday life. What a monumentally disastrous assumption.

Every positive and every negative trend you see in our society today started out as a philosopher's idea. Critical Race Theory has spawned a movement that is based on an idea that would have been utterly impossible had it not started with philosophers in the safe bastions of higher education. Every movement

you can name, liberal or conservative, good or bad, starts with an idea.

Ideas are so important, but no idea is more important than the one that claims that Almighty God has spoken to us in an intelligible way.

Truth with a capital “T” is by very definition universal and absolute Truth. A philosophical idea has rendered truth subjective to most people in our world today. Every time you hear someone say something like, “I’m speaking my truth,” that’s an idea - a very bad idea rooted in atheism - being manifested in real life.

With the death of God came the inevitable death of objective Truth. In a new study 46%, basically half, of all people claiming to be Bible-believing Evangelical Christians say that there is no absolute Truth, and that morality is determined by each individual for themselves. Ideas are important.

Why are there so many, uncountable, Christian cults and denominations? Just why are there so many competing groups, para-church organizations, home-churches, Christian movements, mission boards and

ministry camps? Primarily because of bad ideas. By bad, I mean erroneous, or at the very least debatable. Foolish ideas pushed by the one who seeks to divide us.



The Bible is either God's Word to us setting the foundation, scope, and scale of what He wants for us and from us, or it is not. It is either Truth with a capital "T," or it is not. While the content of the Bible is practically certain, the interpretation and application are anything but.

Ergo, half of self-proclaimed Evangelical Christians think truth is subject to their own imagination and desire. If Bible scholars, and learned pastors disagree on issues like free will, female clergy, marriage, divorce and remarriage, head coverings and tattoos... Then I as an individual Christian am free to create a Christianity all my own and have plenty of support for each position I take. I can find someone on the internet to confirm my bias, no matter what it is.

Where does that leave us? From the very beginning of Christianity - basically later the same day that Jesus ascended into heaven - the church has been struggling to answer that question.



What did they come up with? A very basic premise found throughout New Testament Scripture. Only one thing matters. Jesus. Any person wanting to spend eternity in the Biblical Heaven must be a Christian and all there is to Christianity and being a Christian is Christ. Everything else matters precisely to the degree that it affects that.

Jesus and His Apostles tell us in many different ways, with many nuanced approaches, and from many diverse angles the same thing over and over again. Individual salvation is only found in fully yielding

personally to the Salvation that God has provided in Jesus.

There are predicates to that proposition and there are implications pertaining to it and there are necessary follow-on propositions resulting from it. Predicates are things like God exists. Can't very well have the Word of God without God. Another is that there exists a relational divide between God and humanity that we cannot overcome. In other words, we humans cannot beg our way, earn our way, nor force our way, into His presence and demand anything. In addition, we are finite, and He is infinite. Death is everywhere and while we are helpless before it, the Creator of life itself surely isn't. Can't very well have a Savior if there's nothing to be saved from. One more, God sent Jesus, as fully human He was tempted and as fully God He never succumbed to temptation. Therefore, only He could be the perfect sacrifice to eradicate sin and so death and enable forgiveness and reconciliation, adoption, and right-relationship with God forevermore - we call it Heaven.

There are other predicates that must be accepted as Truth. These are all those associated ideas that the

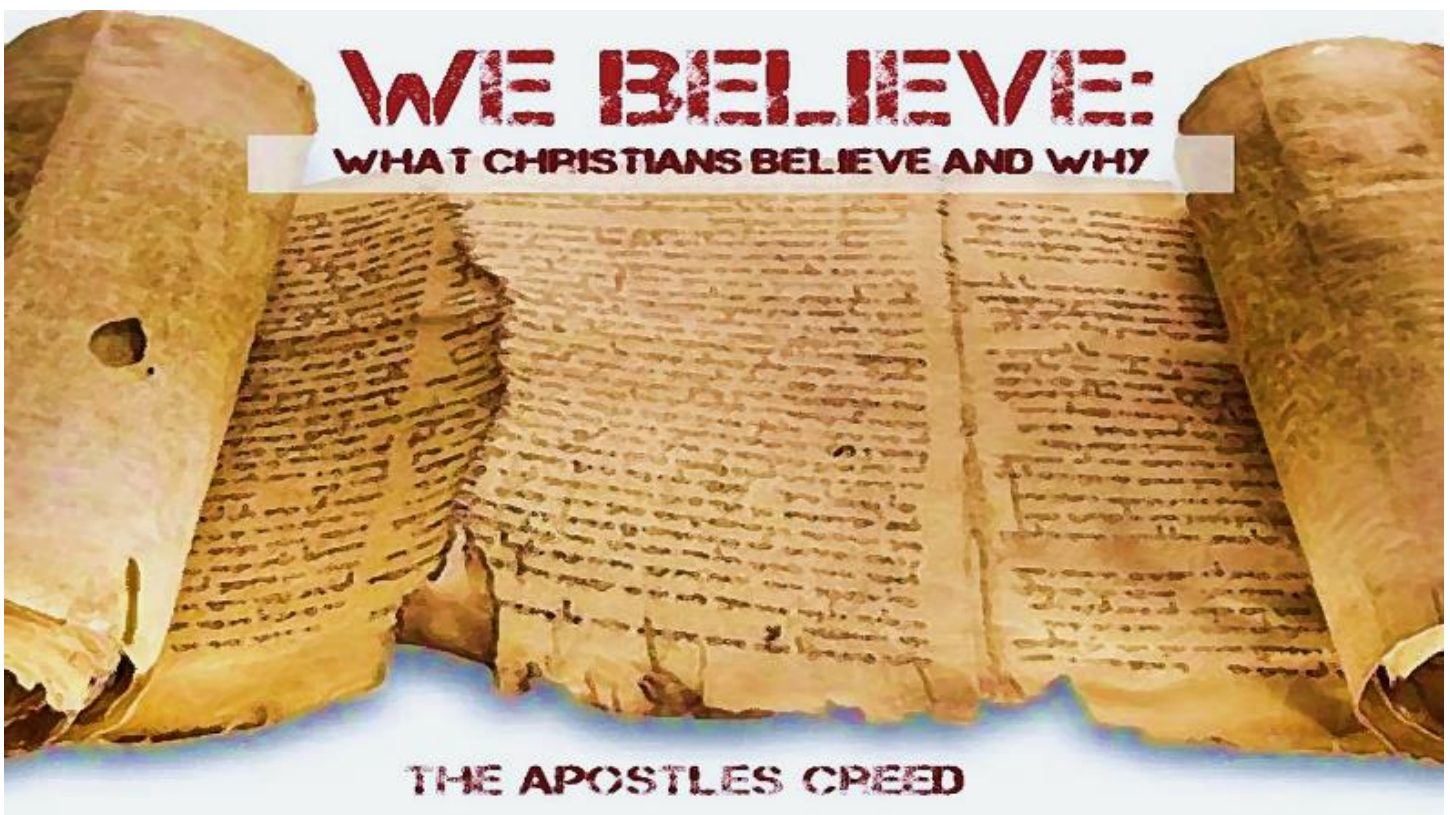
one thing that matters is predicated on. You cannot have Jesus, if you don't accept Him for Who He actually is and for what He's actually accomplished.

Next come the implications pertaining to such acceptance. One huge implication is that such a person is now a Christian and is therefore filled with the indwelling Holy Spirit - that's a big implication.

Finally, we have follow-on propositions - the results or ramifications. Beyond factual implications, there are personal changes. No one can claim to have the Holy Spirit within them and not be moved by the Holy Spirit to more Christ-like attitudes, words, and behaviors.

See how the one thing that matters gets fairly complicated in the practice? That has always been the church's problem through the millennia, and it always came as a result of reacting to a new heresy. Initially, the Bible was good enough, but there's a lot there and as you all know, it takes time and effort to really understand it all. They needed a pithy tract to guide the church. Just a few years into Christianity, perhaps from the first council in Jerusalem less than 20 years after Jesus ascended, the church developed the Teaching.

In Greek it is the Didache. It is a distillation of the Bible, but still too long and involved. That's why they came up with a creed and because heresies kept springing up, that's why they had to keep adding to and clarifying the creed. The Athanasian Creed finalized in about 500 A.D. is the longest accepted creed - it's pretty long.



The first official Creed was the Apostle's Creed. Later to combat the Arian heresy the Nicene Creed of 325 A.D. basically took the Apostle's Creed and took out the bit about Jesus descending into hades, but added some clarifying words especially concerning the nature of Jesus.

Other tweaks followed, each adding clarification to counter new heresies as they arose. While some Christians refuse to recite creeds as a legalistic way to avoid legalism, creeds are a good starting point for orthodox belief. At the very least, if a person is fully on-board with a recognized creed, then their Christianity is at least minimally correct. I would say correct enough for unified fellowship.

That concern for correct understanding of ideas and so, legitimate belief, was one of the most important issues for Jesus, for John here, for the Apostle Paul throughout all of his Bible books. The entire New Testament has, as one of the most common themes contained within it, the vital importance of correct ideas - of the Truth from Almighty God.



In that pursuit, the issue in the Bible almost always takes the form of guarding your belief from distortion by Satan and his agents. Since the Bible was written to Christians, the assumption is that the person has accepted the Truth from some minister of Christ competent to share it. Then the issue is for that Christian to carefully protect their understanding from the corrupting influences purposely attacking them. Whether the “Yeast of the Pharisees,” or the “Ravenous wolves,” “False prophets,” “False teachers,” “False brethren,” or as here the “Antichrists,” we are constantly admonished to guard our ideas about the One thing that matters most - Jesus.

That's precisely what we see in our passage today... The way you know that it is the last hour is that the enemy of Christ, the Antichrist and all his antichrist minions are actively working to destroy Truth. Ideas matter.

Not only do ideas matter, most of us are so easily distracted that we miss the subtle false ideas that we adopt. If Satan can get Christians hating each other over masks, he's done so by feeding us wrong ideas that we not only think are right, but that are noble and good as well. Don't get distracted by the smoke and mirrors - stay focused on Jesus.

To have proper Christian fellowship in the church universal we need to discern which people are the church. When I say that some folks think that it's time to start the Inquisition. The proper way for you to do that is to discern whether you are part of the church and then to encourage those around you, not start gathering firewood in the town square.

We can think of ideas in a hierarchy. The one idea that Truly matters at the top - Jesus - at the top, and then

under Him, in order of importance, those ideas that are necessary to the reality of that one idea at the top. We keep listing things as they come up and eventually, we have a very long rank-ordered list.

Now we draw a line under the lowest idea that is essential. Everything above the line must be accepted and everything below the line are negotiable. They are the ideas that we can disagree about and still respect, honor and love each other as Christians.

Ideas above the line are things like John plainly stated in our verse 22 today. We must, in order to be considered Christians, accept that the man Jesus of Nazareth, crucified outside of Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago, is the Christ.

Fine. What does that mean? This is where we have to define things and that why we end up with more than the one thing above the line. To accept Jesus, we must accept that He was the Christ. To accept that He was the Christ means that He was the One sent by Almighty God as the Savior. There is only One Christ, only One Savior... So, one of the above the line ideas is that

Jesus is precisely as He Himself said the only way anyone is getting to Heaven.

John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." There's really no ambiguity there. Jesus, and Jesus alone, leads to predicates, implications, and results.

The whole problem with the below the line ideas is that you can take the most insignificant thing imaginable and turn it into a salvific issue. The only way to prevent that from happening is to hold very firmly to the above the line ideas and be incredibly humble about the below the line ideas.

What I mean is that we can push below the line ideas too far and they cross the line. An example... Masks. Definitely way below the line until we become snotty about it and offend our brothers and sisters over it... Then it's above the line.



I want to leave you with this. Miss Nell had zero family around her... She would have been the nearly 98-year-old lady who died in a nursing home all by herself, “Doubly dying, going down to the vile dust from whence she sprung, unwept, un-honored, and unsung.” Nothing but a blurb on the obituary page used to line the bottom of a bird cage. Except for one thing. Miss Nell lived her Christian faith touching countless lives all around her. She chose love over comfort. Love over winning. Love over asserting her rights. Love over taking offense. Love over her opinions. Trust me, she had opinions, and she took offense, and she knew her rights, and

she cared about winning, and she enjoyed comfort...
It's just that for Christ's sake she loved more.

You can choose to be so self-focused that you have to stand up for yourself and drive others away, or you can choose to be like Miss Nell.