

# Back to Bible Basics

## Issue 2

### RESPECTING THE DIVINE PATTERN

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In Genesis chapter six the Lord commanded Noah to build an ark for the saving of his family and representatives of all the earth's creatures. The dimensions, design and materials to be used in the construction of the ark were specified by God (6:14-16). The Divine pattern for the ark included instructions to make the vessel out of gopher wood (6:14). Even though we know nothing of the value of gopher wood as a ship building timber, this has not stopped some from speculating that gopher must have been chosen by God because of its superior buoyant properties. However, these scholars are missing the point. It does not matter whether gopher wood was more buoyant than pine or oak. Gopher wood was the type of timber that God specified in His pattern for the ark, and that settled the matter. Therefore, Noah had no choice in the type of timber that he would use to build the vessel that would carry his family to safety. If Noah used a type of timber in the ark's construction that was not authorised by God, then one would expect Noah to have suffered dire consequences for his disobedience.

Is it possible that Noah and his family would have survived the Great Flood if Noah had not respected the pattern that God gave him for the building of the ark? Does God reward disobedience? Noah knew that he served a God who meant what He said. Therefore, Noah constructed the ark according to the Divine specifications. Because Noah concerned himself with the details of God's pattern, the great

patriarch was saved from the wrath of God. Noah knew that attention to the details of any Divinely issued pattern was a salvation issue.

Today, God has issued a pattern for His church. He expects us to give attention to the details of that plan. God's design requires the church recognise Christ as its head (Ephesians 1:15-23). The Divine plan for the church also states that QUALIFIED MEN are to be appointed as elders to ensure that each congregation follows the holy pattern (I Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 20:17-35).

The Lord's design for the church also requires each congregation to worship together on the first day of the week (Acts 2; 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1,2). The Divine pattern for the worship of the church includes singing without the mechanical instrument (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), prayer, partaking of the Lord's Supper, preaching (Acts 2; 20:7), and giving (Acts 2; I Corinthians 16:1,2). God's instructions also state that men are to lead in the worship of the church (I Timothy 2:8-12). The purpose of the church is also given by the Holy Architect. The church is to evangelise (Matthew 28:19,20), encourage one another (Galatians 6:1,2), and assist those in physical need (Matthew 25:31-46).

If Noah used a timber other than gopher wood in the ark's construction, then the ark would not have been recognized by God. Noah and his family would have been lost. Keep in mind that the architect claims ownership for a project - not the one who executes the plan. If a building contractor altered the plans of the architect in any way, the architect would not recognize that building as his design, nor could he be held responsible should that building fail to fulfil its desired purpose. God created the church. He designed the church. If men alter God's plans for the church in any way, it ceases to be recognized by God. The Great Architect will not claim ownership of a congregation that has strayed from the Master's design. We need to keep in mind that none of the details of God's design for the church are superfluous. We must give attention to the details of the pattern for the church or suffer the wrath of God. 📖

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# THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF UNITY

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*“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”* (John 17:20-21)

Jesus offered this prayer for unity just before He went to the cross. How disappointed He must be today when he sees divisions in His church, and thousands of denominations teaching different things all claiming to be His church. An examination of His prayer reveals three important facts.

**1. THAT UNITY IS POSSIBLE:** The Lord did not pray for something that is impossible. His prayer indicates that He desires **all Christians everywhere** in the world to be united in one body. The beauty of such unity is expressed by David when he said *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”* (Psalm 133:1)

This type of unity cannot be accomplished by creeds and Articles of Faith etc. Creeds only cause people to divide into denominational sects of human origin. After Christ died and the New Testament was established, the apostle Paul under inspiration wrote: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be **no divisions among you**; but that ye be **perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**”* (1 Corinthians 1:10.) If unity among believers was not possible, then why would Jesus pray for it and Paul command it?

**2. THAT TRUE FAITH IS THE BASIS OF UNITY:** In His prayer, Jesus assumed that all those who **believed on Him** would be **one**. To express true faith, we must not only believe that He is who he claims to be (John 8:24), but we must also believe what He says and obey His word. *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do **not the things which I say?**”* (Luke 6:46).

The conversion of the jailer illustrates this point. When he asked Paul and Silas what to do to be saved they said *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy*

*house”* (Acts 16:31). However, it was not until he had heard the gospel and obeyed it by being baptised that he was declared to have believed (Acts 16:32-34). In Matthew 7:21-23, we see an example of believers who were lost because they did not do the will of the Father. They called Jesus Lord, but did not do the Father’s will. Like most in the religious world, they were deceived into thinking an emotional belief was all that was needed to save them.

**3. THAT THE APOSTLES’ WORD IS THE STANDARD.** Jesus did not only pray for His apostles, but *“for them also which shall believe on me through **their** (the apostles’) word”*. In this prayer Jesus endorsed the authority of the apostles. (see also Matthew 18:18). Paul, who was an apostle, said *“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”* (1 Corinthians 14:37)

There are no living apostles or prophets today, but the words they spoke are preserved for us in the New Testament. What they received directly from the Holy Spirit, they wrote down. When we read what they wrote, we can have the same insight into God’s word as they had (Ephesians 3:1-5). The apostles’ word is therefore the authoritative standard for church unity.

Unity must have an authoritative standard. Anyone who attempts to build a house, or to play a game of football, without obeying the rules laid out by an authoritative standard, is doomed to failure. This is the same with the church. Christ left His word so that His believers would have a standard that would unite them in one body. Unfortunately, mankind in general has been disobedient and invented their own standards of faith, which is sinful. (Matthew 15:9, Jeremiah 10:23). Paul made it clear. He said, *“There is **one** body, and **one** Spirit, even as ye are called in **one** hope of your calling; {5} **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, {6} **one** God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Ephesians 4:1-6). May God help us all confine ourselves to the perimeters of God’s word and not go to the right or left, thus fulfilling Christ’s prayer for unity. 📖