

Are We Truly Non-Denominational?

www.cvillechurch.com

Introduction: The Trend to be Non-Denominational.

- A. There is a growing popularity of so called “non-denominational” churches.
- B. The increased interest in having a non-denominational church stems from a number of reasons, many which are neither noble nor commendable.
- C. Do we *really* understand what it means to be **non**-denominational?
 - 1. To be non-denominational is not a label one wears with pride; it is a “biblical mindset”, a *Scriptural* way of speaking of the faith of Christ.

I. What is a Denomination?

A. Definition

- 1. A denomination is a group of churches that has chosen a specific name to identify themselves, to separate themselves from other religious groups.

Note: There is nothing wrong with choosing a specific name to distinguish a church, *provided that name is a name given in the Scriptures* (e.g., **Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Tim. 3:15**; etc.).

- 2. A group of churches that follow a specific tradition, teaching, and practice, often based on creeds, not the Bible alone.
 - 3. Under the authority of an administrative body (e.g., sponsoring church).
 - 4. A group of churches united to accomplish a work meant to be fulfilled by the local church or individual Christians (e.g. missionary society).
- B. Where did all of the denominations come from?
- 1. Not being content with the Bible, men went beyond Scripture (**1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn 9**), adding to and taking away from God’s word (**Rev 22:18-19**).
 - 2. Whenever the wrong seed is used a denomination is formed (**Gal 6:7-8**), only by sowing God’s word will Christians result (**Luke 8:11; Rom 1:16**).
- C. Denominationalism is the world’s concept of Christianity.
- 1. *World’s definition:* Church of Christ consists of many denominations or Christian subgroups and **all** members of **all** denominations are Christians.

II. What’s wrong with Denominationalism?

- A. “Denominational Christianity” is foreign and contrary to the New Testament.
- B. Denominations promote division (**1 Cor. 1:10; Gal. 5:20; cf. Jn 17:17, 20-21**).
- C. Denominations lead to the establishment of man-made creeds which change God’s word and divide people (**2 Tim 3:16; Rom 10:17; Col 2:8; Rev 22:18-19**).
- D. Denominations create followers of men, not disciples of Christ (**1 Cor 1:11-13**).
- E. Destroys the autonomy and independence of local churches.
 - 1. Overseers (elders) are commanded to shepherd **only** the members of a church of which they themselves belong (**1 Pet. 5:1-3; cf. Acts 20:28**)
 - 2. Denominations unlawfully extend their rule over *many* congregations.
 - 3. God in His wisdom purposed that churches would be autonomous to safeguard against a widespread corruption (**Rev 2-3; cf. 2 Tim. 2:17-18**)

III. The One Church of Christ is Comprised of Christians, not Churches.

- A. There is *only one* Body or Church (not many as taught by denominationalism).
 - 1. Christ is Head over *one* Body / one church (**Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; 5:23; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 20; cf. Jn 10:16; Mat. 16:18**).
- B. Every person who is saved (becomes a Christian) is added by the Lord to *His church* (**Acts 2:38, 41, 47b**), not to a denomination (or a local church).

1. Those who are baptized are baptized into His one body, the church, the saved (**1 Cor. 12:13**; cf. **Col. 1:18**; **Heb. 12:23**).

2. The church of Christ is made up of **Christians**, not denominations.

C. Individual Christians, who *already* belong to the church, then have a duty to work and worship with other Christians, establishing *local* churches of Christ.

1. Christians located at a specific city or geographical region may collectively work and worship together (e.g., **Rom. 16:16**; **1 Cor. 1:2**).

IV. Are we Behaving as “Non-denominational” Christians Should?

A. Do you have a “non-denominational” mindset?

1. Do you speak as being member of the **Lord’s** church or just a member of a local church that happens to have the name “Church of Christ”?

2. We are not “church of Christ’s” but instead simply Christians (**1 Pet. 4:16**) that belong to the church of Jesus Christ.

B. Do you refuse to speak in denominational ways of your faith?

1. You must not give the *slightest* indication that you believe that you belong to a denomination!

2. We must avoid labels, partyism, or any hint of a denominational affiliation (cf. **1 Cor. 1:10-15**).

C. Do you lead people to Christ or merely to the “local church of *your* choice” (regarding the church like a “denom. preference”)?

1. Christ, not the Body (Church) is the Savior (**Eph. 5:23**); we are first and foremost leading the lost to Jesus Christ, not to any particular local church.

D. Do we expose or condone the error of denominationalism? (**Eph. 5:11**)

1. We must not submit to the “age of toleration” and condone error, but instead be helping people out of their error and teaching them the truth.

E. Don’t confuse being non-denominational with being **interdenominational**.

1. Some fellowship all churches and claim to be nondenominational!

2. That’s not true unity, that’s a compromise of the truth of the gospel!

V. How Can a Local Church Be Non-Denominational?

A. Independence and autonomy are essential, but not everything.

B. Respect Christ as Head over the church by obeying His Word (**Eph. 1:22-23**; **Mat. 28:18**; **Col. 1:18**; **3:17**).

C. “The Faith” is taught (**Eph. 4:5**; **Jude 3**; **Acts 16:5**), not something “different.” (**1 Cor. 4:17**; **1 Pet. 4:11**; **New Testament law - Luke 22:20**).

D. Non-denominational does **not** mean not standing for anything! (1 Tim. 3:15).

E. Law is defined by God’s word, not church leaders (**James 4:12**; **John 12:48**).

F. Practice the word of God *just as* the first century Christians did (**Acts 2:42**; cf. **1 Pet. 1:23-25**; **Heb. 4:12**).

G. By claiming not to be more than a local church.

1. Christians are **not**, authorized by God to organize all Christians everywhere in the world or “activate” the universal church!

2. There is no authority for a religious organization greater than the local church!

3. A **non**-denominational church will respect the *spiritual* mission that the Lord has given her (**Acts 2:42**; **Phil. 4:15-18**; **Eph. 4:16**; **Acts 11:27-30**).

Conclusion: Christians Can Truly Be Non-Denominational When They Commit Themselves to being *Only* Christians Who Belong to the Church of Christ.