

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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WHAT IS DENOMINATIONALISM?

By Andrew Dow

The church that meets on Woodland Hills Dr. boldly claims to be non-denominational. What does this mean? What is denominationalism and why do we avoid it?

Let's begin with a definition. At its most basic level, to denominate a thing is to name it. This is why we call various monetary notes denominations—e.g., one is “named” a five dollar bill while another is “named” a ten dollars bill, etc. Therefore, things that are denominated (i.e., named) are separated from other things.

When used in a religious setting, a denomination is “a recognized autonomous branch of the Christian Church” (New Oxford American Dictionary). The denominational view of the Lord's church, therefore, is one that “names” various sections of the church—e.g. the Baptist section, the Methodist section, the Presbyterian section, etc.—yet views them as equals. Sure, one person may prefer one denomination to another (much like I prefer a ten dollar bill to a five dollar bill), but denominationalism ultimately posits that they are all equal paths to God (much like a ten dollar bill and a five dollar bill are both usable in a transaction).

This is problematic from a Scriptural point of view, however. First, denominationalism (even of the ecumenical variety) is based on division. The only reason there are denominations is because there are have been divisions

among Bible believers in doctrine and practice. This is hardly the way Jesus envisioned His people when he prayed to God **“that [Christians] may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me”** (John 17:21). The denominational concept does not conform to Jesus’s expectation of unity; therefore, any denomination must not be from Jesus.

Second, denominationalism shows a misunderstanding about the nature of the church Jesus came to establish. Jesus came **“to seek and to save that which was lost”** (Luke 19:10) and He accomplished this by **“out of darkness into His marvelous light”** (1 Pet 2:9). These people comprise the church (or assembly) that Jesus came to establish (cf. Matt 16:18). Furthermore, we see members of Christ’s church meeting together in various locations (what we sometimes call “local churches”) to work and worship together (cf. Rom 16:16; Gal 1:2; Rev 2–3). You see, the Bible indicates that Christians are part of Christ’s assembly of people and consequently join a local church to work and worship with. Denominationalism, on the other hand, falsely suggests that Christ’s church is made up of denominations, which are made up of local churches, which are made up of people. This unbiblical perspective has been the cause much misunderstanding and error.

Before we conclude this brief discussion of denominationalism, we should be aware of an important and present danger we face in this church. Although we espouse to be non-denominational (as we should), we must be careful not to become denominational in our practice or in the way we think about this church. When we say things

like, “I’m Church of Christ” or “I’m a Church of Christ-er” we are betraying a denominational view. When we think that we’re in some way connected to area churches that share our name or beliefs (e.g., “Oh, the XYZ Church of Christ? They’re one of us!”) we are betraying a denominational view. When we think about “The Church of Christ” as something to be compared with “The Baptist Church” or “The Methodist Church” we are betraying a denominational view.

Biblically speaking, the church that Jesus built is nothing like denominationalism. We never see Jesus condoning the division of His church. His church comprises all of those who are saved. We never see Jesus condoning any religious organization larger than the local church. Local churches are merely collections of Christians who are working and worshipping together in any given location. Let’s be careful to always follow the Biblical pattern in this church.

ENTHUSIASM

By W. R. Jones

Enthusiasm is a valuable tool in the work of the Lord. When we are filled with enthusiasm more than likely it will rub off on others and they will catch the same spirit. There are two ways to view things. You can view with *defeat* and *despair* or you can view with *hope* and *victory*. Some look at the glass which is filled midway and see it differently. To some it is seen as negative because it appears to them as “half empty.” Others view it as “half full” and consider it positive. They are thrilled to see the glass of water even half full! Caleb and Joshua, of the Old Testament fame,

knew there were great obstacles in conquering the land of Canaan, but they had every confidence they could do the job. They gave the reason for their victorious spirit. They said, **“The Lord is with us!”** They knew the glass was only half full, but with the Lord’s help they saw great possibilities.

It was enthusiasm for what he had found that caused Philip to **“find Nathaniel”** and bring him to Jesus. When Nathaniel wondered about it, Philip said, **“come and see!”** This same enthusiasm today will cause us to invite others to **“come and see.”**

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Should Christians
Fast Today?

PM LESSON:
Singing Night:
He Keeps Me Singing

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)