



THE SEVIERVILLE SOWER

Sowing the seed (Luke 8:11) into the hearts of mankind.

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What's the Difference Between the Church of Christ and Denominations?

Brian R. Kenyon

From time to time, church members will be asked a question similar to the title of this article. There are many ways in which this can be answered, such as only the church of Christ started at the right time (Daniel 2:44), in the right place (Jerusalem, Luke 24:49; cf. Isaiah 2:3; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47), by the right person (Jesus, Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23) and with the right doctrine (Matthew 16:19; Acts 2:38; Romans 16:16-18). No denomination can claim any of these points! However, there is one single Bible verse that also totally exposes the difference between the church of Christ and all denominations.

Colossians 3:17

The most concise yet comprehensive way to answer the question is to accept and apply what Colossians 3:17 teaches. This verse reads, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (NKJV).

Notice the three statements in the beginning of this verse that show how much an individual or a group of individuals calling themselves a church must do by the authority of Jesus Christ: (1) "whatever you do" leaves nothing out; (2) "in word or deed" includes everything, even thoughts, because they determine speech and actions, and (3) "do all" encompasses everything. Any one of these statements by itself would teach that Jesus' authority is needed for everything we do, but when the God-breathed Scriptures give that scope three times in one verse, there is an undeniable emphasis: *everything* we do, must be done with God's authority! Understanding and applying these three, practically synonymous, statements is the key to distinguishing the difference between denominations and the faithful church of Christ!

The phrase, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," means that everything a church or individual does must have the authority of Jesus (Acts 3:6; 9:29; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; James 5:10). He has been given "all authority" (Matthew 28:18). Anything a church does that cannot be supported by New Testament authority is sinful and thereby reflects denominationalism. For example, many denominational churches will claim their authority for using mechanical instruments of music in worship is found in David and in the Psalms (81:2; 98:6; 149:3; 150:1-6). However, whether David was actually commanded to use them in worship or in some other setting is irrelevant to New Testament worship. Our authority must come from the New Testament. David and the Psalms are Old Testament. There is no authority for using instruments in worship today!

There is also a huge misconception in denominationalism that "in the Lord" simply means dedicating a certain action to the Lord, thereby making that action right and acceptable to God. I have

heard sincere members of denominations say, "God has blessed me with this ability to play the piano, so He must be pleased and honored when I use that talent in worship to Him, in His name." The problem with this kind of reasoning is that it is not humanity's place to determine what pleases God! It is God's call, and He has told us through His written Word, the Bible, what pleases Him. We must worship God by what He says (John 4:23-24), not by what we desire or think is appropriate (Matthew 15:8-9; John 4:22; Acts 17:23; Colossians 2:20-23).

A person's claiming to do something "in Jesus' name" does not mean that he or she is truly doing something in Jesus' name (i.e., by His authority). Consider Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount.

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:21-23)

Notice how they called Jesus, "Lord, Lord," but that did not really mean He was their Lord (cf. Luke 6:46). Notice also how they claimed three times to have done remarkable things "in Your name," yet Jesus responded, "I never knew you." Why? Obviously, because they did not truly follow the Father's commands (Matthew 7:21). What we think are good works may not be what God determines good works. Again, just because people claim to do something "in the name of the Lord" does not mean they are actually doing it with His authority!

Conclusion

There is a difference between denominational churches and the church of Christ, and, rest assured, **that difference matters eternally!** We must study the New Testament to know the truth about what the church is and what God actually authorizes for His church (2 Timothy 2:15). Equipped with that knowledge, we can discern whether a group of people calling themselves a church is just another denomination or truly the church for which Christ died (Acts 20:28), to which He has added the saved (Acts 2:47) and for whom He will come again to take and be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). This discerning should also sometimes include those who assemble in buildings with "Church of Christ" lettered on their signs. The one test that will distinguish the true church from denominationalism is to see that "whatever [they] do in word or deed" is "all" done "in the name of the Lord."

Prayer Requests & Announcements

Keep Connie Duncan in your prayers as she will be having shoulder surgery on the 10th of this month.

Shirley McKnight will be seeing an orthopedic surgeon on January 4 in preparation for her upcoming hip replacement surgery.

Cindy Langston is recovering at home from a recent illness. She had a Covid test and will be getting the results soon. Her son, Joey, who was diagnosed with Covid, is recovering at home. Also, her sister's grandson, Antonio, has recently been diagnosed with Covid.

Remember Tammy Gresham in prayer regarding the recent passing of her mother.

Shirley Agee was exposed to Covid and is quarantining at home until she receives her test results.

Remember our sister Chris Bender in prayer. Her aunt Lolita passed away recently. That makes five of her loved ones who she has lost in the last six months.

Paul Rolen, Mary Kate's brother, is scheduled to have back surgery on January 24. Your prayers are appreciated for this lengthy and extensive surgery.

Please remember in prayer Cassie Glenn, a visitor to our services, who has received a new treatment for her asthma and hopes to be back at our assemblies soon.

Continue to Remember...

Chris Bender, John and Helen Carr, Dennis and Marty Danilchuk, Lindsey Johnson, Shirley McKnight, Sue Moore, Lyn Morris, Joanne Roark, Shirley Yeager, Becky Duncan (Joe and Connie's daughter-in-law), Brittany Hutchcraft (Shirley Yeager's granddaughter), Adam Lane (son-in-law of Vickie Price), Harlie McClung (John and Helen Carr's 12 year-old great-granddaughter), Anita Ogle (Sherry Simms' friend), Casie Rains (friend of the Hansens), Paul Rolen (Mary Kate's brother), Frankie Simms (Scott Simms' father), Wayne Tart (Tammie Fish's brother).

Fellowship lunch: Today

Monthly afternoon song service: January 30

Evangelism Materials

Extra supplies for our evangelism work are freely available in the supply room to our members. Instructional books, DVDs, and Bible study materials are available. We also have a variety of cards for our Compassion Card work.

Weekly Assemblies

Sunday: Bible Study 9 a.m.
Worship 10 a.m.
Worship 1 p.m.
Wednesday: Bible Class 7 p.m.

Family Time

Gary C. Hampton

A daily poll is a part of a website I enjoy visiting from time to time. A recent poll asked people where they eat supper. Forty percent said, "In front of the TV." That led me to a question. Does the television distract family members from paying close attention to what other family members might be saying? The survey did not have a response for what a person was doing while eating the meal. How many appear disinterested in their families because of smart phones and tablets?

God directed that the family make a continual effort to teach and train children. Notice Moses' words to the second generation of Israelites delivered from bondage in Egypt.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NKJV)

Parents should make every effort to learn what their children are doing and thinking. Seize upon questions, viewing them as teaching opportunities. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Abraham serves as a living example of that approach when going to carry out God's command to sacrifice Isaac. "But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering'" (Genesis 22:7-8).

God's desire for children is that they be taught by their parents. Successful parenting must include continual teaching. Questions should be viewed as opportunities. Let us all pray God will bless our efforts to bring our children up in the way God would have them to go.

Elders

Randy Hansen, Robert Moore, Kevin Ruiz, and Jerry Sutton

Deacon

Lenwood Johnson (finance)

Preacher

Kevin Ruiz