

Our religious climate has lots of “non-Bible” terms in it. Words like Pre-Millennialism or Calvinism. And, in principle, I guess you and I don’t really need to know what those words mean. We simply read the Truth, do what we see, and use Bible terms to describe our faith.

But in reality, if we hope to convert our friends and family from error to Truth, we will need to know some things about what they believe. What we must not do – is try to half do this. You know, where we’ve heard something all our lives about some religion or idea. We build a strong belief against it, and are willing to say so openly, but really haven’t studied much and maybe don’t know what we are saying.

A good example is with this word: **Denominationalism**. Nearly everyone here would say this is not the will of God. People must leave it to be right with Christ. And you might even say, “I am non-denominational.” But, what does any of this mean? Could you explain your position to someone? Let’s investigate this a little bit today in hopes of a) knowing what we are talking about b) aiding in helping others see the Truth.

Well, before I show you a modern definition, and we discuss the Scriptural ramifications of this, let’s first acknowledge that we are familiar with this word outside of spiritual talk.

***Money** – In a cash register there are different compartments for different “denominations.” There are six slots for \$1 \$5 \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 – Each is different. They have different numbers and faces and values, however, they are all money. They have a fundamental connection and all go in the same register. Religiously, all denominations believe they belong in the same register – The Church.*

With this in mind, the definition of denominationalism is easily understood – “to break or divide into separate parts” but while still maintaining a sense of the one whole. So, in our culture, a Baptist will quickly say that their denomination is different from Lutheran, but that they are all Christians (whole).

With this the pop culture website Wikipedia agrees: *“The belief that some or all Christian groups are legitimate churches of the same religion regardless of their distinguishing labels, beliefs, practices.”*

*“Theological denominationalism ultimately denies reality to any apparent doctrinal differences among the “denominations”, reducing all differences to mere matters of name.”*

*“Some Christians view denominationalism as a regrettable fact. As of 2011, divisions are becoming less sharp, and there is increasing cooperation between denominations.”*

So, it is very much like cash in the drawer. You are a \$5 and I am a \$10. We are different. We believe differently, we have different leadership and standards. However, we will overlook that and let one another enjoy that difference because we are all one in Christ. This is called Unity in Diversity.

Q1 - Okay, what is wrong with that? Why are we markedly “non-denominational”? One could simply say that the term is not found in the Bible and therefore error, but that is overly simplistic and proves nothing. After all, if the principle is present then it is authorized regardless of name. But if the Word of God stands opposed to the principles of denominationalism, it is false and error and sinful. This is not an indictment of the members as bad people, but people who need to turn to the truth of God’s Will.

Q2 – Why are we “non-denominational” and what exactly is that? Well, if we can first see how the idea measures up with Scripture, I think the answer to this question will be easily identified.

I would like us to open our Bibles and study the Top 3 Reasons why Denominationalism is Error.

### 1) Division is Never the will of God

- a. All right positions start with the Head, Jesus and His words and will. Did He ever, at any point, show any pattern for or allowance of different beliefs under His name?
- b. Jesus promised one and only one church – **Matthew 16:18**
- c. Jesus is the Head of One Body, how then can they differ? - **Ephesians 1:22-23.**
- d. Jesus prayed for unity among His people – **John 17:20-21.**
- e. Paul condemned division among God’s people – **I Corinthians 1:10; Romans 16:17-18.**
- f. The “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” is found in the ONE’s! – **Ephesians 4:1-6.**

## 2) Doctrines taught and practiced Matter to God

- a. Someone may contend – “we are unified and one, we just believe different things about the Bible and what God’s will is for mankind.” This is a foolish statement. As we just saw in Galatians, to change the Word is to distort it and make unity impossible!
- b. Jesus puts the ultimate premium on Truth – **John 12:47-50**.
- c. There are no choices. Only His words or devastation – **Matthew 7:24-27**. (Ex – **Matt. 5:32**).
- d. Departure from “what you received” is to be utterly opposed – **Galatians 1:6-9; 2:11-14**.
- e. Paul expected Christians to see that the truth matters – **I Corinthians 14:34-38**.
- f. What is true of the book of Revelation is true of all God’s will – **Revelation 22:18-19**.

## 3) Denominations are foreign to the Word of God

- a. In addition to division not being God’s will, and various beliefs on an issue not being the will of God, the entire denominational design is completely foreign to God’s design.
- b. No matter how long accepted, is it from God or man? – **Matthew 15:3-9**.
- c. There is but One Body, the One True Church – **Matthew 16:16-18**. This includes all disciples who confess Him and obey Him. A denomination is smaller than this. It is a specific, unique group of churches that have a unique belief system.
- d. Among Christ’s body, there are Local Churches – **Acts 14:21-23**
  - i. *Local groups of Christians in a given location.*
  - ii. *All “continuing in the faith.”*
  - iii. *Each one self governed by a group of men called “elders.”*
- e. A denomination is bigger than that, different than that, overseen with men with more jurisdiction than that. So, if it is too small to be the One Body, and too large to be Local Churches, and that is all God designed for His people... then denominationalism is of man and to be rejected.

**Conclusion:** So, what does it mean to be “non-denominational”? Unfortunately, this is a term that has been hijacked by “new age churches.” In principle, it is a solid term. It means we...

- 1) Do not accept that there will be division of organization and name, all united under Christ.
- 2) Do not accept that you can teach different doctrinal principles and be one in Christ.
- 3) Do not accept a structure, a man-built leadership model that is not from Christ.

Denominationalism accepts all these things, and therefore is not acceptable to the God of heaven.

New age churches come up with new names like “Grace Fellowship Church” and use the term non-denominationalism. What they mean is that we are not one of those stacks of money. We are a seven dollar bill, and one of a kind, and live in the drawer in a new slot all to ourselves. But often they still accept others as “one in Christ,” they teach things not found in the Bible, and build their own man-made hierarchy – so it is actually still denominationalism in terms of points 1) and 2).

Who we are is a group of people who have believed, turned from sins, been baptized in water, added to the One Body of Christ, and serving Him in truth and love. Who we are is a local group of Christians who live by His revealed pattern only, and therefore have our own local leadership, as He taught us, and teach that God’s way, and only God’s way, makes one right with God. That, my friends, is non-denominational.

Terms are just terms. Titles are just titles. Names are just names. In the end, designations mean nothing. Faith and Trust and Obedience to God mean everything: from the individual, to the local church, to the entire body of saved people in Christ. So, don’t ask “Am I denominational?” Ask: “Am I right with God?” Don’t ask, “Do we teach the truth on baptism?” – ask: “Have I obeyed the truth on baptism?”

*“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” **Ephesians 4:4-6**.*

Are you following His will and living in His body? There is no question of more importance than that.