

What Kind Are You, Anyway?

It has happened several times through the years. People discover you minister a church and ask--- what kind? Saying a Christian church, does not satisfy, as you must surely further denominate yourself by adding some other name to it, in their opinion.

If they insist, I guess I really could feel association with most every other named group, even though we may disagree on some of the doctrines they promote.

For instance-- I could say, I am a catholic, for catholic means universal and I am a part of the universal church, the body of Christ. I am orthodox, for I subscribe to orthodox and traditional principles and methods. I am reformed, for our church works at constant reformation of deviations from the Word of God. I am Methodist, for truly I believe in tried and true methods in fulfilling the Lord's purpose. I am Presbyterian, because presbyters or elders have full authority in our church. I am a Congregationalist, as our congregation is autonomous and rules itself in accordance with Scripture. I am Unitarian because our plea is certainly the same as Jesus, that the followers be united, one. I am Pentecostal because I see the church as it was started on Pentecost and follow that pattern. I am a Baptist, because that means baptizer, and we certainly believe in baptism and that each follower be obedient to Christ in immersion. I am holiness, because the Bible teaches that without holiness we cannot see God. I am apostolic, because the teaching and example of the apostles forms the foundation of our church doctrine. I am church of God, since from the beginning, God planned to send his Son to die for our sins and establish the church.

I cannot really say I am Lutheran or Wesleyan because while I admire some of the work of these men, they did not advocate their name being attached to a church nor would I take the name of a human for a divine organization. I am not really Nazarene, for I am not from Nazareth, and while Jesus grew up there, his citizenship was beyond being identified with any city.

So I could give folks a long list that would identify me with a lot of terms used for Christian groups, but the fact is-- first, foremost we are Christians. The name we are called to wear (Acts 11:26) and should be joyful to wear exclusively, without any sectarian additions or subtractions.

It might pay us to study closely I Cor 1:10-17 and see that taking other names simply because you might see them as leaders was not pleasing. Paul reminded folks that it was Christ who died for them, and it was into Christ they were baptized.

Such denominationalism has become a stumbling block to the gospel message being carried in to all the world. The name Christian is accepted by all.

And if we all use "Christian" in universal agreement, why not drop the others, for while most are descriptive terms of the church that we might subscribe to, there is only one name that honors the one who gave his life for us. It would be a giant first step to ending confusion and a beginning toward fostering unity.