

“So, tell me a little about your church.”

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When was the last time someone asked you about where you worship? Some people are genuinely interested to learn about the church you attend. So, the last time this question was asked, what did you say?

Maybe you said you attend a “non-denominational church.” Today, people seem to be drawn to non-denominational churches due to their views of independence. Maybe you described how we worship. Or, maybe you talked about the make-up of the membership of the church.

These types of responses give helpful information in broad strokes. It can be difficult to be detailed or technical in a casual conversation. In this article, we will offer Biblical insight into the Church of Christ. Hopefully, you can incorporate some of this information into your response the next time someone says, “So, tell me a little about your church.”

About the Church of Christ

1. Significance of the name. Names indicate character and give information about a person, group, or organization. The word “church” simply means those who are called. God calls us to Himself through the Gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 2:14). The death and resurrection of Christ mean Jesus is our Lord. Therefore, a church of Christ is a collection of people who have answered His call to obey Him.

The term “church” also indicates an assembly. In the ancient Greco-Roman world into which Christianity was born, there were mainly two types of religious assemblies: 1. Assemblies to worship idols. 2. Jewish assemblies. The word “synagogue” means “assembly. So, what’s the point?

Churches of Christ were groups of people assembling in the name of Christ, Jesus our Lord. These assemblies were distinct from pagan assemblies and Jewish assemblies. Within the communities where churches of Christ gathered, they were noticeably different from other religious groups. For example, in Thessalonica, the church was accused of teaching Jesus was king, not Caesar (Acts 17:6-7). Also, in Ephesus, Paul separated the Christians from the synagogue and assembled in the school building of a man named Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-9).

Today, the assemblies of churches of Christ are to be distinct from other religious assemblies. In our culture, the Church of Christ is typically viewed as just another religious option among many. What made churches of Christ different from other religious assemblies in the first century? What will make them different from other religious assemblies today?

2. A distinct doctrine. The Church of Christ had a distinct doctrine in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Christians taught that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. They taught that He

died on a cross as an atonement for our sins and that He was raised from the dead. The doctrine of the Church of Christ was the Gospel.

Some of the Jewish community accepted this doctrine. The first Christians were Jews. However, many of them rejected this teaching. The Jews were pragmatic. They were looking for a Messiah who would lead a political revolution. To them, a crucified revolutionary was no revolutionary. On the other hand, some Greeks/Gentiles accepted the Gospel. Yet, most rejected the doctrine. To them, a deity subjecting himself to crucifixion was ridiculous.

Despite the overwhelming rejection of the Gospel, churches of Christ continued to preach this unique doctrine. They recognized salvation only came through obedience to the Gospel. To this end, Paul wrote, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:22-24).

Today, churches promote all kinds of messages. Some try to uplift the community economically. They might offer job training. They may focus on education. In the fall, they might provide school supplies and tutoring services to children. Or, they might become engaged in politics. They might regularly invite political leaders to speak to their congregation. Yet, churches of Christ in the New Testament were singularly focused on preaching the Gospel of Christ.

3. A new morality. The doctrine of the Church of Christ is designed to transform hearts and behaviors. The Gospel calls us to a new morality. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, people were generally unrestrained in their behavior. However, the Gospel changed the conduct of Christians.

The ancient Greek physician, Galen (129-216 AD), once commented on two clear traits of Christians. He said the Christians believed in the resurrection of the dead and that they did not sleep around. Galen could not say that of his fellow Greeks. For example, Paul once quoted the Greek poet, Epimenides (Titus 1:12). He said that Cretans were liars, evil, and lazy. Also, to describe someone as being immoral to the core, the Greeks would accuse them of living like a Corinthian. Yet, there was a church of Christ on the island of Crete and in the city of Corinth. The Gospel changed some of the people in these immoral places.

Christians are to be honest in their dealings with others. They are to be self-controlled. They are to be faithful to their spouse. They are not to engage in petty gossip and slander. The moral standard to which they live is the product of the Gospel changing their lives.

A church of Christ represents a group of people trying to influence the community with the Gospel through godly living. Witnessing moral living offers hope for a better life. The Gospel produces godliness in the present and gives the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:1-2).

Conclusion

We may read the New Testament and be familiar with the happenings among churches of Christ. Yet, we tend to struggle to connect to the culture. However, if we are careful in reading, we will notice that the Church of Christ was distinct, different, and unique.

Today, our world is different compared to the ancient world. However, the first century can teach us an important lesson. The Church of Christ is to be distinct. If we are thoughtless or accommodating, we can lose our identity.

The name of our religious group is important; however, this name brings a sober responsibility to Christians. Being part of the Church of Christ is a symbol of our obedience to Jesus, our King. We must honor our relationship to Christ by upholding His doctrine. We must share His saving message with those who need it. We must use Gospel to reshape our morality to the glory of God.

The next time someone asks, "So, tell me a little about your church," tell them about Christ. Tell them about the Gospel. Tell them about the value of godly living. Tell them about the hope of eternal life. And, if he or she is unsure about what you are saying, tell them, "Come and see."