

INTRO

When we tell someone we're Christian, sometimes the response is, "Oh, what religion are you?" What people really mean is, "What denomination?" A denomination here is simply a group or branch of a religious group. Within Christianity, *thousands of* movements and practices exist, from prominent groups with millions of members, to house churches of 100 or fewer. Since the organized Church has since its earliest days confessed the belief in "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church," an appropriate response might be: Holy Body of Christ: *what's up with that?*

We're going to talk about Christian denominations and their similarities and differences (spoiler alert: they don't all agree).

We're also going to consider the difficulties and benefits that come with a multitude of denominational groups, rather than focusing only on divisions of doctrine and social stance. So! Buckle up, brush up on your own tradition's core beliefs, read about some others', leave judgement to Jesus (he's better at it), and join us as we brew the question: "what does the denominationally (dis)unified body of Christ mean for our faith?"

DECODING DENOMINATIONS

The (dis?)Unified
Body of Christ

a Brewed Theology
conversation starter*

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What denomination are you? Why? Do you know anything different? Can you define what it means to be [whatever you are]? What are your first memories or impressions of other faith traditions, denominations, or even religions? Did you (or your family) move from one to another? What do you think God thinks about denominations? Are they good? Are they bad? What are some advantages and disadvantages of there being so many?

BIBLE BASICS

- **Matthew 15:16-19** – Peter calls Jesus the Christ, is named foundation of the church. (No pressure, Peter.)
- **1 Corinthians 1:10-17** – The go-to passage for suggesting denominations are not a great thing.
- **1 Corinthians 12:12-31** – There's one body, but lots of members. What does this mean for denominations? Are we meant to be in one organized church-body? Or are we still one body, with many organizations?
- **Titus 3:4-11** – A bit of condemnation of divisions and differences of all kinds.
- **Acts 10:27-48 & Acts 15:1-11** - Think divisions in the church are a recent thing? See these discussions about whether Jews or Gentiles (or both?) were recipients of God's promises in Jesus.

ESSENTIAL READINGS and VIDEOS* (click the **headings** for links to knowledge)

A (BIG) OVERVIEW

Check out this big overview from The Gospel Coalition that summarizes (helpfully, but plentifully) a wide swath of Christian denominations. Which are you? Which are you familiar with? Which are new?

List of Christian denominations by number of members

From Wikipedia, the title says what it is! Check out the graphics of the denominational family tree, too.

SUPER CHURCHY – The Augsburg Confession

One of the founding documents of churches coming out of the Reformation. Written in 1530. Skim to your heart's content, but scroll down and read Article VII "Of the Church" and VIII "What the Church Is."

Post-Denominational Christianity

Article by Jason Derr on his Patheos.com blog "Faith Forward." He says the church is dying. Do you agree?

WHY WE NEED DENOMIONATIONS

By Jason Todd, for *Relevant Magazine*. Do we need denominations?

CHURCH UNITY: WHO CARES?

Article by Layton E. Williams, for *Sojourners*. Thinking through churches dividing over social issues, and whether that's such a bad thing after all.

SHOULD YOUR CHURCH MATCH YOUR POLITICS?

Some research shared on *Christianity Today* by Lifeway Research about how people feel their churches *should* share (or not) their politics, and whether they *do* or not. What do you think?

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