

## **“What is Your Defining Doctrine?”**

During the past couple of weeks, several people outside of the church have asked, “What is the defining doctrine of your church?” It seems that most denominational churches promote one or two different teachings that are unique to them. These differences are what they call their “defining doctrine.” Without getting into the question of whose church it is, there are some differences that we can point out to those who ask such a question.

One of the first things that we could mention would be the fact that we do not use instrumental music in our worship. Nearly every denomination uses musical instruments in their services. However, when we examine the New Testament, we see that the early church never used such instruments in their worship. The only form of music that we do read about is singing (*Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16*). Even though they were available, they never used instrumental music.

Another answer that we could give to this question regards baptism. In most denominations, baptism is an “outward sign of an inward grace.” In other words, they say that one is baptized to show that they have been saved. However, when we consult the New Testament, we never see baptism referred to in this manner. We are “*baptized...for the remission of sins*” (*Acts 2:38*). Jesus Himself said, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (*Mk. 16:16*). We are baptized so that we can be saved, not because we have already been saved.

These are two of the most common differences between the New Testament church and denominational churches. But perhaps there is another way that these differences could be summed up. The key to the church being different from denominations is the fact that we follow only the Bible. Most denominations have a “creed book” that they refer to for doctrinal answers. Some have councils that vote on important issues. However, if we are going to be the New Testament church, we must follow the Bible.

Because there is only one church, there should be no “defining doctrine” that we promote. Each doctrine that we follow should come directly from the New Testament. If we add any doctrine to the New Testament, then we are no longer the true church. If we take any doctrine away from the New Testament, then we are no longer the true church. There is no “defining doctrine” that we follow because each doctrine of the church is important. May we always strive to be the true church, nothing more, nothing less.