

# A Name Changer

For some time now, it has been intriguing to watch the phenomenon of institutions changing their names. While the reasons vary, it is usually either to attract people who might be repelled by the original name or to avoid being associated with people who share their name.

I am told that many years ago, a large Midwestern church paid a marketing company \$50,000 to determine what they could do to reach more people. The marketing people came back with one suggestion: "Change your name from Grace Baptist Church to Grace Church." Of course, we have seen many people who have dropped the name "Baptist," preferring to be a community church or use some other generic title.



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More recently, people have started dropping the name "church." The Southside Baptist Church that I attended as a college student is now the Southside Fellowship. Neither the word "Baptist" nor the word "church" made the cut in this instance.

For some years now, people have been objecting to the term "Fundamental," feeling that it connects them in some way with radical Muslims and confuses the average citizen. Some who once called themselves Fundamental now refer to themselves as Orthodox.

In response to a recent 20/20 television program attacking the Independent Fundamental Baptist church movement as a "cult," some no longer use the term "Independent" but call themselves instead "Autonomous."

Most disappointingly of all, Campus Crusade for Christ is now going by the name "Cru." (I find this one particularly ironic. They said that the words "campus" and "crusade" had little significance to the average college student. Pray tell, what in the world does "Cru" mean? This "reason" seems fallacious and phony on its face.)

People seem to make the changes for two connected reasons. In fact, I would consider them to be two sides of the same coin. One is the fear of man. "Oh, no! After they said all those bad things about Independent Fundamental Baptists, people are going to think I'm like the ones they talked about." Or, "Oh, no! Baptists have a really bad reputation in our area. We will have to call ourselves something else."

The second reason is the desire for man's approval. "They'll like us if we're just a 'church' rather than a 'Baptist' church. They'll come to us if we are a 'fellowship' or a 'gathering' but not if we're a 'church.'" I saw the stationery of a church that would call itself Independent Fundamental Baptist and noted with disappointment and amusement that in large letters it said, "\_\_\_\_ Ministries." Underneath in very small letters, it said, "Christian School. Daycare. Baptist Church."

I must say that to me, much of this seems just plain silly. The last statistics I could find stated that approximately 4.3 million people watched 20/20. That may seem like a large number, but it accounts for 1.4% of the U. S. population. In other words, 98.5% of America didn't watch 20/20. Of the 4.3 million who did watch it, most will not remember the story a few weeks from now. We vastly overestimate the power and influence of the media. (Of course, they aid in giving a false perception of their significance.)

There are some names I intend to continue to use.

Jesus. While I cannot know all the reasoning or motives of the organization that dropped "Christ" from its name, I certainly have noted a concerted effort to remove the name of our Savior from public discourse. Chaplains are told that they may not pray in His name in public places. (It is important to note that the recent court challenge won by

Mayor Rex Parris of Lancaster, California, strongly supported in Federal Court the right of an individual to pray at a City Council meeting in the name of Jesus.) Now, the name “Jesus” is no ordinary name. It is the only name “under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” It is the name of our Savior. I will absolutely, positively, and unchangeably refuse to pray any place where I may not pray in the name of Jesus. If my Savior is not welcome, neither am I.

Baptist. I consider this to be a Bible name. The Scripture tells us, “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached . . .” Luke 16:16) The Bible makes the ministry of John a dividing point between the old and new covenant. My Savior was baptized by a Baptist. I’m not a Baptist because I like its brand better than another. I’m not a Baptist because I find the opportunities of being a Baptist to exceed the opportunities of being another denomination. I’m a Baptist because Baptist doctrine is Bible doctrine.

Church. The Lord Jesus died for the church. He instituted the church. An evangelist can only have a “ministry.” He does not have the privilege of pastoring a church. A church may operate many ministries, but there is no ministry more significant, important or Scriptural than the church.

Independent. Now, the word independent is not a Bible term; it is merely an adjective which ought to describe our operation and behavior. It simply says to people that we are not part of a larger denomination; that we operate under God as an individual entity. I find this to be a good word, a helpful word, and easy to explain.

Fundamental. The word “Fundamental” is not a Bible term. Fundamentalism as a movement came into being as a response to Liberalism. The Five Fundamentals of the Faith were what a person must believe to be saved, to be an orthodox Christian. They are certainly not an entire list of all the important doctrines. There are many people who believe the Fundamentals of the Faith with whom I could not have fellowship. Yet they are saved people. The word “Fundamental” means “essential.” Some doctrines are essential to my salvation. That does not mean that other doctrines are unimportant. I would not be a part of a church that did not baptize by immersion, and yet baptism is not fundamental to my salvation. I personally feel that the word “Independent” explains our organization and government, “Fundamental” explains our basic doctrinal position, and “Baptist” explains our ecclesiology.

Years ago, Dr. Harry Love, who is now in Heaven, went to purchase a car. The salesman came back and said, “I’m sorry, but we can’t give you a loan for this car because you have poor credit.” Dr. Love said, “That’s ridiculous. I have excellent credit.”

“No,” the salesman said, “We checked and the request for the loan was denied.”

“Check again,” said Dr. Love. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that there was a preacher in the city of Detroit named Harry Love who had poor credit. Of course, it is unusual that there would be two preachers named Dr. Harry Love. The confusion of the car dealership is understandable. But Dr. Love did not change his name. Though someone had abused his name, it was a good name. It had come to him from his father and mother. He rapidly lived down whatever confusion had attended his name, and he maintained his testimony. He died leaving a good name to his children.

Name-changers? Some of it seems silly. Some of it is compromise. Some of it is unscriptural. At this point, my view is that none of it is necessary . . . for what it’s worth.