

8 Reasons Christians Are Leaving Denominational Churches

While working on an unrelated research project, I recently came across some data published by the Hartford Institute of Religion Research. Though the information was five years old, it still seemed highly relevant today. In essence, the data showed that nondenominational churches are now the second largest Protestant group in America. Only the Southern Baptist Convention is larger.

Here are some of the fascinating nuggets from that study:

- There are more than 12 million people who affiliate with nondenominational churches.
- The research found at least 35,000 nondenominational churches in America.
- Nondenominational churches are in 88 percent of the counties in the United States.
- Nondenominational churches are one of the top five largest religious groups in 48 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In light of the growth of these churches, I conducted an informal Twitter poll and asked why people are moving to nondenominational congregations from churches affiliated with denominations. Here are the top eight responses in order. There is obvious overlap in some of the responses.

1. Denominational churches have a negative reputation. Some respondents used the phrase “negative brand” to communicate this reason.
2. Denominations are known more for what they are against than what they are for.
3. There is too much infighting and politics in

denominations.

4. The denominational churches are too liberal. From what I can tell from these respondents, they are current and former members of mainline churches.
5. There is a general waning of institutional loyalty in institutions such as denominations.
6. Denominations have inefficient systems and organizations. They are too bureaucratic.
7. Some of the respondents could see no perceived benefit to belonging to denominations.
8. Denominations are not good stewards of their financial resources.

I plan on doing a second poll in the near future to see how respondents view denominations positively. In the meantime, let me hear from you.

Thom Rainer is the president of LifeWay Christian Resources. For the original article, visit .