

# Identifying a “Liberal” Church of Christ

1 Cor. 11:19

## Introduction:

- A. In an ideal world, all “churches of Christ” would be basically the same (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17).
  - 1. Would be no need to classify: “Instrumental - Non-instrumental”; “Institutional - Non-institutional”; “Liberal - Conservative.”
  - 2. Would have no need to investigate before traveling, vacationing, or visiting with relatives.
  - 3. Would have no problem finding a church for children away from home.
  - 4. Would not need to worry about bidding godspeed to religious error.
- B. In the real world not all “churches of Christ” are the same. (Cf. Churches of Asia)
  - 1. Some differences may be insignificant.
    - a. Procedural differences.
    - b. Cultural differences.
    - c. Developmental differences.
  - 2. Some differences may be very significant.
    - a. Differences in basic structure and organizational.
    - b. Differences in fundamental doctrine..
    - c. Differences in congregational work and/or worship.
- C. Among churches of Christ, “liberals” and “conservatives” have different approaches to the application of Bible authority.

## Discussion:

### I. Where One Is *Less* Likely to Notice a Difference.

- A. In the appearance of the place of worship.
- B. In the nature of the Lord’s day worship.
  - 1. Except in certain areas where “instrumental” churches of Christ meet.
  - 2. Except in some cases where liberalism is very far advanced: Solos, choirs, etc.
- C. In terms used for church personnel: Elders, deacons, preacher, evangelists, etc.
  - 1. Except in advanced stages: Youth ministers, singles ministers, pulpit ministers, music ministers.
  - 2. Except in very prestige conscience churches: “Dr. Blank, etc.”

### II. Where One Is *More* like to Notice a Difference.

- A. The financial report.
  - 1. Among conservative churches:
    - a. The revenue will come from Lord’s day contributions (1 Cor. 16:2).
    - b. The expenditures will be for items for worship and preaching/teaching (evangelism & edification) or benevolence.
  - 2. Among liberal churches.
    - a. In some cases other means of revenue used.
    - b. In all cases expenditures will include some items not found in the scriptures:
      - (1) Support of human institutions to do the work of the church.
      - (2) General welfare and benevolence programs (N. T. limits it to needy saints).
      - (3) Pay for facilities and personnel for social and recreational activities and programs.
      - (4) Expenditures for community and school projects.
- B. The “extra-curricular” activities lists.
  - 1. Things other than worship, preaching/teaching, benevolence.
  - 2. Listen for them in announcements or look for them in bulletin.
  - 3. Look either for the activity or the one who directs it.
- C. The presence of facilities to facilitate “extra-curricular” activities.
  - 1. “Multi-purpose” buildings.
  - 2. Gyms, play grounds, dining (“fellowship”) halls, day care, schools, etc.
- D. The kind of teaching/preaching they are willing to accept. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-4).
  - 1. If no difference, would they have a “conservative” preacher for a meeting?
  - 2. If no difference, will they let me preach come there an preach on work & organization of church?

## Conclusion:

- A. We are not proud of the difference, but we must recognize it.
- B. We must be careful not to be a party to unscriptural practices — directly or indirectly.