

The Christian Common Denominator

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26, 28 NKJV).

A well known definition for common denominator deals with mathematics:

- A quantity into which all the denominators of a set of fractions may be divided without a remainder (American Heritage Dictionary)
- An integer exactly divisible by each denominator of a group of fractions: 1/3, 1/4, and 1/6 have a common denominator of 12 (Collins English Dictionary)
- An integer that is a common multiple of the denominators of two or more fractions (WordNet)

A lesser known definition refers to people:

- A commonly shared theme or trait (American Heritage Dictionary)
- A belief, attribute, etc., held in common by members of a class or group (Collins English Dictionary)
- An attribute that is common to all members of a category (WordNet)

My husband and I are privileged to be involved in an international ministry where we encounter Christians all over the world. For Christians, there is a symbolic correlation between the primary and secondary definition of common denominator. The common denominator in mathematics is always the bottom number in the fraction: the base. The foundation of all believers is Jesus Christ. As we mature in our faith, we become more and more like Him, sharing His characteristics. The traits (the common denominator) that make us alike are those attributes that we have obtained by virtue of the fact that we are all in His family and are being conformed to His image (Romans 8:29).

Each person must come to faith in Jesus alone. Once a believer, however, he is then part of a whole. The Bible refers to this “whole” in many ways: a family i.e. children of God and brothers (John 1:12, 1 John 3:1-2, Romans 12:1, Galatians 4:28), a flock (John 10:16), God’s elect (Romans 8:33), the church (Matthew 16:18, Acts 5:11, Acts 8:1, Ephesians 3:10), the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:17, Ephesians 4:12), building or temple (Ephesians 2:19-22) and the Bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7, 22:17). Our commonality is based “in Him” (Ephesians 1:4, 7, 10, 11, 13).

These are some common traits among true believers everywhere:

- Love for others – compassion (Galatians 6:10). I have observed incredible sacrificial love on the part of Christians throughout the world. They believe that God has given them a purpose for being and that involves loving and serving

others. They are involved in taking care of the needs of the Body of Christ and ministering to those who do not yet know Him through humanitarian service.

- Joy in the Lord (John 16:24, John 17:13, 1 John 1:4). Our travels have taken us to prosperous countries and poverty stricken nations as well as those who are in a time of transition. The cultural norm in some countries is to be very serious with only a rare smile while other nationalities are naturally gregarious and outgoing. Regardless of the circumstances in which these dear brothers and sisters in the Lord live, there is a distinct difference between believers and non-believers. The joy of the Lord is always evident among His family members.
- Sense of family. No matter where I worship, I feel at home. I know that I am with family. The sense of belonging is immediate and does not leave when I travel to another destination. If God does not allow me to return to serve in a particular location again, I am aware that I will see them again. We will live forever with the Lord.
- Sacrificial spirit (2 Timothy 2:3). Many of my brothers and sisters truly *endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ*. The hardships take many forms: persecution, deprivation, misunderstanding, physical ailments, family trials and many more. The common thread of sacrificial love among believers is that the hardship is understood in the context of God's plan to use them for His glory. Even in the midst of hardship, believers are "others oriented."
- Teachable. There is a constant delight in encountering believers who are eager to learn more about Christ and apply what they have learned. I feel a tremendous blessing in teaching many who are hungry for solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2, Hebrews 5:12).
- Exercise their spiritual gifts. The common denominator of us all is Christ, but He has equipped each of us with unique qualities and gifts to be able to serve Him. Together, we make a whole (Ephesians 4:4-7) and His Spirit uses us to cause growth in the body (Ephesians 4:15-16). It is a delight to observe members of His family use their gifts.
- Desire to please and glorify God (2 Timothy 2:19). With Christ as our solid foundation, believers work at removing sin in their lives so that their lives will glorify Him. Bringing glory to God is a uniform goal among true believers.

Without Christ, we can do nothing. With Him, anything is possible (Matthew 17:20, 19:26). Collectively, as one in Christ, we are the answer to His prayer (John 17). When we obey His command to love Him and others, the world can see Him in us.

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common . . . and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:44,47b NKJV).