

What is a "COC"?

Our society's breakneck pace has caused us to demand that everything be done in an instant. This attitude has affected all aspects of our lives, including our speech. Have you noticed the proliferation of abbreviations over the past few years, especially since text messaging came onto the scene? Did you know that you can get a text message dictionary to help you translate this new language? In some ways it's probably advantageous to be able to say something in fewer words, but one particular term seems to be getting more usage and to me it is disturbing.

Just what is a "COC"? It could stand for "Chamber of Commerce." Perhaps it represents "College of Charleston" or the "Canadian Opera Company." In fact, it's such a generic abbreviation that it could stand for any number of organizations. The trouble is that some in the Lord's church are using "COC" to stand for "church of Christ." In their haste to get on to the next words in a sentence, those who use it to designate the church for which Jesus shed His blood have basically lumped this holy body in with a host of undistinguishable man-made groups.

Some may think that I'm going a bit overboard with this and that it's really not that big of a deal. To me, anything that replaces scriptural terminology as well as relegates the name of our Lord to a mere initial is worthy of consideration. Does Romans 16:16 say, "The CsOC salute you"? Is there anywhere in the writings of God's inspired penmen that we can find either the church or the One who shed His blood to purchase it referred to as merely "C"?

We understand that there is more than one scriptural designation for the church (see Acts 20:28, I Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 12:23; et al.), but "church of Christ" is one of those. In referring to the church by this name, we have an opportunity to glorify Christ, the founder of the church (Matthew 16:16-18) and also to teach others that the church does indeed belong to Christ. "COC" doesn't accomplish either of those important tasks.

In 1982 the world was introduced to the "Reader's Digest Bible." Only 45% of the original Old Testament was retained while 25% of the New Testament was "condensed." The rationale was that, "The average person approaching the Bible for the first time is likely to be overwhelmed by the size of it." Despite its intended purpose, the "Reader's Digest Bible" was offensive to those who did not want to see God's Word abbreviated or condensed. Now, just 29 years later, we find ourselves abbreviating scriptural terms. Is there much difference between this and what the "Reader's Digest Bible" committee did?

Peter eloquently wrote, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (I Peter 4:11). The Lord carefully crafted each word of His message to mankind and then inspired men through the Holy Spirit to write exactly those words, nothing more and nothing less (I Corinthians 2:10-13). Jesus did not die for the "COC." There is no salvation in anything known as the "COC." His blood purchased the church of Christ (Acts 20:28, or "church of God" in this verse). Christ is the head of His church (Ephesians 1:22) in which salvation alone can be found (Acts 4:12). Those who have obeyed the Gospel are not "Cs." We are Christians, wearing the name of the One who redeemed our souls with His blood (I Peter 1:18-19; James 2:7).

Both our Lord and the church which is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23) are deserving of the utmost respect, honor and appreciation. Hopefully this matter is just an oversight on the part of those who substitute "COC" for "church of Christ."

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