

---

# WHY WE BELONG TO A DENOMINATION

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

I am very glad to be a pastor in a church affiliated with a worldwide denomination. Our denomination is “*The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel*.” It’s a long name and most of us abbreviate it to “Foursquare”—a term which means “*Up front; plain and simple*.” Our denomination (family relationship) spans the globe, connecting over sixty-six nations.

I would not want to pastor a denominational church, one that is chauvinistic about its identity or exclusive in its attitude, but neither would I want to lead an independent church. Independent congregations claim to be more open to fellowshiping with all believers, but in my experience, they are less open to accountability for their own actions and policies because they lack outside reference points.

“*Lone Rangers*” may be exciting to watch, but they are dangerous to follow! Even men and women of great integrity can be led astray if their only point of submission is to themselves. As happy as I am for our Church Council, I thrill in the balance and safety afforded to me by my colleagues in ministry and by those to whom I submit in ministry. We share ideas, mistakes, successes, and experiences with one another.

Everyone needs to belong to and submit to something larger than themselves—something broader than their own perspective, something more developed than their own experience, something which reminds them of their limitations—yet which serves them at the point of those limitations. As a church, our relationship with our denomination provides this needed context within which we can freely function.

Denominations are made of people—other pastors, pastors of pastors, administrators and thousands of members of congregations. The collective expertise and resources of such a group are staggering. And they are available to counsel, or to correct me; to advise or admonish me—to me both, offer precedent and permission.

That is why we so strongly recommend to our European friends that they link their churches with Foursquare. The benefits to each local congregation cannot be overestimated.

How unrighteous and foolish it would be to suppose that our denomination (its doctrine, polity and style) is *the* best. It isn't. It is only one worldwide group to belong to. We want to always love and serve other segments of Christ's body on earth. The purpose of denominations is not to divide believers or churches, but to effectively channel resources to needs.