

Our New Name! Ps 139

I announced about 5 months ago that we're changing the name of our church, and this is it. So I'm going to take the entire time to announce it, explain it . . .
And show it to you in the Scriptures. Hoping you'll embrace it and love it as much as I do. Bibles.

I have 6 categories for you, starting with our . . .

1. Motivation

Why we're changing our name in the first place. There are 3 main reasons.

1. We're no longer a part of Harvest Bible *Fellowship*. We pulled out of that a year and a half ago, and it doesn't even exist anymore.
So there's no compelling reason to retain a name that coincides with it.
2. We're no longer associated with the church or pastor who *started* the Harvest movement. And don't want to be.
There have just been too many decisions over the years that we don't resonate or agree with, and even more as of late.
And while we've *always* been an autonomous self-governed church, sharing a name implies association and support. And nothing could be further from the truth.
3. On the positive side, we want to convey our *own* identity. Who *we* are.
Not that we're lone rangers or something, but that God has uniquely shaped us with people and passions for such a time and such a place as this.
So instead of conveying someone *else's* DNA, we're going to convey ours. As God has made *us*. That's our motivation.

2. Process

We started talking and praying about this 2 *years* ago. And after about a year, decided to move forward. Thinking in earnest as elders and staff leaders . . .
And then putting together 2 focus groups to help us – one from the congregation, and the other from our staff.

And I just want to say publicly to those groups, *thank you* for all your time and effort.
We didn't *choose* one of your suggestions, but they definitely helped us clarify our thinking and narrow our focus.
So this has been a long time coming, and we took our time.

And the *transition* to our new name is *also* going to take some time. Probably 6 months.
We'll ease into it, in order to avoid confusion, and flip the switch for good with our new signs.

3. Difficulty

We not only took a long *time* to make the decision, we *labored* over it.
We went back and forth. We liked what we originally disliked. We hated what we first loved. We lost sleep. Threw up our hands. And then did it all over again.

We also recognized that no name is without its negatives. It doesn't exist.
Every name has its downsides, and it's a lot easier to critique something than create it.

And no two people *see* names the same way; or perceive them the same way.
In fact, the *different* reactions to various names blew me away.
How 2 people, can look at the same name, and have diametrically opposed thoughts about it, is beyond me.
It's like two people looking at a coffee cup, and one saying it's half full while the other says it's half empty, when there's nothing in it.

And then came the realization that it's a lot easier to come up with *bad* names than good ones.
Like "P-Rob's Bible Shack" – a favorite of some of our young adults.
Or "Steeple People" – even though we don't have one.
Or "River City Worship" – with 76 trombones and a big parade.
Or "Shekinah Glory Holy Spirit Fire of Life" – because we didn't want to leave anything out.
Or my personal favorite, "Church 127" – because we're located at the corner of 53rd and I-74, which equals 127.
Wouldn't that be cool? "What verse does 127 stand for?"
"Any one you want. Because church is all about you."

All that to say, this hasn't been easy.

So, enough about what it's not, how about what it is? The . . .

4. Name

Are you ready? The new name of our church, is **Coram Deo Bible Church**.
We don't have a logo, we don't have a font, we just have the name.
Coram Deo Bible Church.
And the question in everybody's mind, is "What does that mean?"

Let me answer that this way. Coram Deo Bible . . .

Church – because that's who we are

We're a group of "called out ones." That's what the word "church" *means* in Greek.
A group of people saved by grace through faith, and called by God to fellowship, worship, and minister together.
So if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck – it makes sense to call it a duck. Or in this case a church. Because that's who we are.

And . . .

Bible – because that's what we believe

The only thing I was certain about in this entire process, was the inclusion of "Bible" in the name.
It's the very word of God; it's the foundation for why we exist; it's the source of how we should live; and it's the book that's being set aside more and more.
By more and more individuals, and more and more churches.

Even politicians. We just had a handful of newly elected representatives take the oath of Congress on the Quran, a Buddhist sutra, and the Hindu Vedas.
Anything *but* the Bible. Which has been used for 240 years in our country. Set aside.

And no wonder. Because churches have been taking Bible out of their *names* for upwards of 50 years now. Not to mention their preaching and pews.

All in order to accommodate the *cultural* rejection of God's Word, and a lack of *belief* in God's Word.

We're not doing that. Because that's the exact *opposite* of what the world needs. The exact *opposite* of what churches should do.

We're going to stand *strong*. Let our light *shine*. Lovingly but firmly, say it like it is: "We're a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church."
So much so, it's our middle name.

Church – because that's who we are. Bible – because that's what we believe. And . . .

Coram Deo – because that's how we live

It's a Latin phrase, that means "in the presence of God."

Or more literally, "before God." Like standing before a king. You're "in his presence." A concept, that's found all *over* the Bible. In fact, it's one of the over-arching truths of our *lives*. And for Christians, it "captures the *essence*" of our lives. (R.C. Sproul)
We *live* Coram Deo – in the presence of God, under the authority of God, for the glory of God. That would be the expanded definition.

I first heard that phrase 22 years ago when I started working with a post-prison ministry.

And I've thought for many years that it would be a good name for a church.

Little did I know it would be ours. Conveying exactly who *we* are.

A Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church, that lives in the *presence* of God, under the *authority* of God, for the *glory* of God.

That's our new name, and that's what it means.

That said, I want to elaborate on that, by taking you through the reasons we chose it.

5. Reasons

And there are 7 of them. 7 reasons we chose this name, and love this name.

A. It's biblical

Ps 139:7. I want to show you some of the places in the Bible where this comes from.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

Rhetorical questions to say "nowhere." We're *always* Coram Deo. Inescapably.

[8] If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol [a place of death or despair], you are there! [9] If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, [10] even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. God, is everywhere. Which means we're *always* in his presence. Coram Deo.

[11] If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," [12] even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

We're not only always in God's presence, but we're never out of his sight. Whether we want to be or not. Like it says in **Heb 4:13**.

[13] No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. We're Coram Deo.

And then down in v15 of Ps 139, David adds to it. Saying . . .

[15] My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately

woven in the depths of the earth. [16] Your eyes saw my unformed substance.

Even in the womb, before we're ever developed and born, we're Coram Deo. In the presence of God.

Because God is *every-where*, and sees *every-thing*. Like Jeremiah recorded. (**Jer 23:24**)

"Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD. He does.

Every last part of it. Which means we're Coram Deo 24/7/365, everywhere we go.

➤ It's true here on earth, and it's true in *heaven*. And not just when we get there someday, but right now. We're Coram Deo in heaven as we speak. (**Heb 9:24**)

For Christ [as a result of being our sacrifice; that's the context] *has entered, not into holy places made with hands* [like the tabernacle or temple of old], *which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God* [Coram Deo] *on our behalf.*

We are in God's presence *here*, because God is omnipresent . . .

And we're in God's presence *there*, because we're *in* Christ, and he represents us. He's Coram Deo *on our behalf*.*****

So it's true on earth as we speak, it's true in heaven as we speak, and it's true in our *hearts* as we speak. With the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, never to leave us or forsake us.

We're Coram Deo here as well. Here, there, and everywhere.

➤ And it's *always* been that way. Even in the Old Testament.

When the tabernacle was set up (**Tabernacle Graphic**, ESV Study Bible, p186) during the *desert* wanderings of the Israelites . . .

God instructed them to place 12 loaves of *bread* – representing the 12 tribes of Israel, the people of God at that time – across from *The Golden Lampstand*.

And do you know what the bread was called?

The Bread of the Presence. Capital P. (Ex 25:23-30). Because it sat in the presence of *The Golden Lampstand*, representing God's light of life.

Conveying the truth that even in the desert, they were Coram Deo. Living in the presence of God, under the authority of God, for the glory of God.

So no matter how you look at it – past, present, heaven, and future – we're Coram Deo.

Like Paul said in **Act 17:28** – *In him we live and move and have our being.*

It's *where* we live, and *how* we live. Always has been, and always will be.

That's the first reason we chose this name.

B. It's important

The implications of living Coram Deo affect every single area of our life.

On the one hand it's an incentive to greater love and good deeds, and on the other it's a deterrent to sin.

I'll never forget the basketball practice in college, when a former player came in to watch and help us out. And not just any player . . .

But the longtime record holder for rebounding. He held 'em all. Rebounds in a *game*, rebounds in a season, career, average – you name it. He was an animal.

And *in his presence*, I rebounded like I've never rebounded before or since. Ever. How much more *Coram Deo*? When God's standing there. It spurs us on.

And, hems us in. When we're prone to wander. Prone to rebel.
Who wants to sin in the presence of God?
It's important.

C. It begs a question

Far from a vanilla name that you never think twice about, *Coram Deo* piques your interest and begs a question. Just like you were asking when I announced it.
“What does that mean?”

And I love that, because it gives us a golden opportunity to *speak* about God. To say,
“In the presence of God.”
“Why would you name your church that?”
“Because that's how we live. Especially as followers of Christ.”
“We're in the presence of God, under the authority of God, for the glory of God.”

We chose it because it begs a question, and gives us an opportunity to speak.

D. It has a history

This phrase does. First made popular by the Reformers some 500 *years* ago.
They used this phrase as a simple reminder to see life as an integrated *whole* – no longer compartmentalized between the religious and the secular.
And a reminder to *live* life with a constant *awareness* of God's presence.
It has a history.

Which means it's the furthest thing from being new, or cool, or edgy, or trendy. It's about as old as dirt.

Nor is it highbrow – overly intellectual or academic.
Just because something is unfamiliar, doesn't mean it's “foofy” or elitist.
Nobody thinks that about *Angels We Have Heard On High*; when we sing “Gloria in excelsis Deo” at Christmas.
Or when you hear someone say “Carpe Diem.” Or “Hallelujah” – a transliteration of the *Hebrew* language. They're just more familiar to you.
And this will be too. Especially since you now know its history.

And I hope we never lose sight of the fact that we stand in a long line of godly men and women who have used it and lived it over the centuries.
And on the broad shoulders of people who gave their lives to preach it.

E. It's unique

Not there's anything new under the sun, but that it's not very common.
There are one or two other churches and a para-church organization that use *Coram Deo* in their name, but nobody with *Coram Deo* and *Bible*.
It's pretty unique. And we're thankful for that.

But it's definitely not safe – neutral, or vanilla as I said before.
It's like Susan in the Chronicles of Narnia.

Who was approaching Aslan, the lion and representation of Christ, and asked, “Is he safe?” To which Mr. Beaver said, “Safe? ‘Course he isn't safe. But he's good.”
And the same is true of this name. It's not safe, but it's good. Unique.

F. It's easy to say

Which is important, because it won't be used otherwise.
Just like college students take the shortest path from A to B whether there's a *sidewalk* or not, people will refer to a *church* by the shortest and easiest way.
And *Coram Deo* is it. It rolls off the tongue.
And for those of us who say it all the time, that's especially important. Otherwise we wouldn't say it.

G. It's us

It not only describes who we *want* to be as a church, but who we *are*.
We've talked about it many times. And you exemplify it. I could go down the list.
So while the *phrase* is new, the concept is not. It's us. Always has been, and always will be. Especially so, as God uses our *name*, to impress it on our hearts even more.
(Summary)

Those are the reasons we *chose* the name, and love the name. And hope you do too.

And then last, is . . .

6. Perspective

The name of our church is important, but it's not everything.
The *substance* is *everything*. Who we worship is *everything*. The book on which we base it, and how we preach it, is *everything*.
We could have the worst name in the world, but if the substance of our lives and the culture of our church shines the light of Jesus Christ, all is well.
Keep a healthy perspective on this.

Second, consider that even the strangest names become the accepted norm.
Like *Apple* for instance. Who would have thought that would be an accepted name of a *computer* company? Let alone *synonymous* with computers?
After a while, *Coram Deo* will simply represent our church. The hard part, will be making sure that our church represents *Coram Deo*. Perspective.

Third, a year from now, and probably less, this won't even be a blip on the radar screen.

And last, while our *name* is changing, our mission isn't – to glorify God through the fulfillment of The Great Commission in the spirit of The Great Commandment.
That's the same. Our *name* just reminds us of who we are, what we believe, and how we live as we do that – in the presence of God, under the authority of God . . .
For the glory of God. (Summary)

So let me be the *first* to say – “Welcome to *Coram Deo* Bible Church.”

Pray – Lord, would you impress this truth on our hearts and souls? On our lives and our church? If you're for us, and you're with us, what can stand against? Remind us of that.
And use *our* name to glorify yours.