

# A Short History of Modern Non-denominational Evangelical Churches

## EARLY CHURCH (Acts–3rd Century)

### Core Foundations:

- Authority of the Scriptures
- Regeneration by the Spirit
- Fellowship of believers
- Gospel proclamation

### Key leaders:

- Peter, James, John, Paul

## THE REFORMATION (1500s)

The Reformation recovered the supreme authority of Scripture and proclaimed salvation by grace alone through faith alone, rejecting works-based righteousness while reforming—but not fully separating from—state-controlled church structures.

### Recovered Theology:

- Sola Scriptura
- Salvation by grace alone through faith alone
- Justification apart from works

### Limitations:

- State churches retained
- Infant baptism preserved

## THE ANABAPTISTS (~1600s)

The Anabaptists (Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish, ...) insisted on voluntary, believer-centered faith marked by believers' baptism, a clear separation of church and state, and discipleship expressed through obedient, transformed living.

### Key leaders:

- Menno Simons
- Jakob Hutter

### Enduring Contributions:

- Voluntary faith
- Believers' baptism
- Church distinct from state
- Discipleship as obedience

### Ideas Not Inherited:

- Mandatory communal living
- Absolute pacifism
- Cultural withdrawal

## REVIVAL MOVEMENTS (~1900s)

Revival Movements re-centered Christianity on personal conversion, urgent gospel response, and transformed lives—providing the experiential engine that powered modern evangelical and non-denominational churches.

### Key leaders:

- Jonathan Edwards
- George Whitefield
- Charles Finney
- Billy Graham

### Distinctive Emphases:

- New birth
- Personal conversion
- Immediate gospel response
- Assurance of salvation
- Lay participation

## THE EVANGELICAL SYNTHESIS (1900s)

The Evangelical Synthesis was the early-20th-century convergence that unified Reformation theology, Anabaptist voluntarism, and Revivalist conversion into a stable, mission-driven evangelical core.

### What Converged:

- Reformation theology
- Anabaptist voluntarism
- Revival urgency

### What Was Refined:

- Theology anchored in Scripture
- Discipleship without legalism
- Evangelism without state coercion

## MODERN EVANGELICAL NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES (1940–Present)

Modern evangelical non-denominational churches emerged where Reformation theology, Anabaptist convictions about personal faith, and Revival practices of conversion and evangelism converged.

### Defining Characteristics:

- Gospel-centered preaching
- Personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Believers' baptism symbolic of salvation
- Discipleship & small groups
- Evangelism & missions
- Independent local governance
- Bible more important than creeds

### Key leaders:

- Billy Graham (Evangelistic Unifier)
- Chuck Smith (Church-planting pioneer)

### Modern Drift:

- Scripture-centered → audience-centered
- Gospel clarity → therapeutic motivation
- Discipleship depth → attendance metrics
- Shepherd leadership → celebrity branding