

How did Substance get its name?

The short answer: Substance is actually an alternative name for Christ. Going all the way back to ancient thinkers like Socrates and Plato, Greek thinkers argued that, if God existed and wanted to communicate with us, He would need to become “Substance” – which is exactly what happened when Christ entered the world.

Throughout church history, theologians debated things like “trans-substantiation” (Does Christ literally indwell the communion elements?) But the key word is Substance. As Paul put it in Col. 2:17, Christ is the “substance of things to come.” He’s the fulfillment of the ceremonial law. He’s the sacrifice for our sins. He’s the solution to all our problems.

In the scriptures, our faith is also a type of “substance.” “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) And here at Substance, we strive to be filled with Christ and the faith that enables us to inherit the age to come.

But why such a strange name? The answer to this reveals a bit more about our heart and methodology.

First off, we are a multi-media oriented church that wants to excel in reaching a digital world. Having a unique name has given us a distinct marketing advantage in piercing through a noisy world. And in a day and age when domain names and twitter handles matter, we cannot afford to look like everyone else.

More importantly, according to research, most Americans are quite skeptical of the institutional church and its traditions. Traditional churches are dying faster than ever. Thus, we wanted a memorable and unique name that piques curiosity and simultaneously says: “*We are not the church that you or your parents quit on.*” And so far, the name has worked quite well. Close to 43% of our attendees didn’t attend church before coming to Substance.

We’ve been asked: Are you a nightclub? Are you an addiction recovery group? To which we respond: “Well, Kind of! But not the kind you’re imagining! :)”

Keep in mind, at Substance, we’re not “anti-tradition.” We love the historical church and rich heritage of spiritual disciplines it offers. (I’m actually a huge church history buff). Rather, we are simply extra aware of how “church culture” can obscure the “substance” of our Gospel.

Thus, Substance is not a descriptor of who we are. It’s a descriptor of the One who’s making us into something amazing. Christ is the Substance. And we want more of Him.