

How to Find a Good Church

It goes without saying that every believer should have a church home where they attend regularly. If you are not a part of such a fellowship, the following advice will be invaluable to your search.

1. Look for a church prayerfully. As is the case with all other aspects of a Christian's decisions, you should begin your search for a church by seeking the Lord's direction. The Bible promises, *"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"* (Prov. 3:6).

2. Search out good prospects. You might look for listings in the newspaper or in the yellow pages. Always seek the congregation which is evangelical and Bible-based. A referral from a trusted Christian friend is the most frequent way people are introduced to a church. A visit or two is helpful, but there is no way to fully evaluate a church without attending most services for a month or so.

3. Keep in mind that you're looking for a fellowship of believers. A church is not a building, nor is it merely a ministry, it is the body of Christ. So seek people who love the Lord and who love each other — people that will love you and people to whom you can give your love.

4. Look for the church that preaches the Word of God. Seek the fellowship that has sound doctrine, proclaims the Word, and sincerely lifts up the Lord Jesus Christ in worship and in all they do. Much of this can be discovered by observation, but most fellowships have a printed statement of their doctrines they will provide to you upon request. For clarity, you can speak with the pastor or leadership about their beliefs or practices.

5. Look for a church that has good character. Seek a loving, peaceful, stable church which has a pastor devoted to godliness, prayer and the word, which are more important than his eloquence, education or charisma.

6. Look for a church that will help draw you closer to Christ. It might be nice to find a church where the music is flawless, where the seats are padded and the minister dismisses promptly at noon. But more importantly, you need a church that cares about you and who will help meet your spiritual needs — that will inspire you to grow in Christ, and will motivate you toward the aspirations of God. You need a church whose preaching and teaching will not merely appease or entertain you, but will boldly challenge you to advance beyond your comfort zones to live toward God's high ideals.

7. Look for a church where you can become committed. In many ways, your relationship with the church is similar to a marriage — you can't get any more out of it than what you put into it. The only church in which you will ever grow and mature spiritually is the fellowship where you will commit yourself and get involved — where the people submit themselves to God and to each other — where they will both encourage you and hold you accountable.

8. Seek that fellowship that is attempting to reach lost souls. Find the fellowship that is seeking to bring lives to Christ, both in their community and on foreign mission fields. Such a church understands its purpose and will provide a healthy environment in which to grow.

9. Look for a church where you can contribute. I've often heard the comparison made between a church and a restaurant — a place where you get served a meal. But actually, the church is more like a pot luck dinner. What you bring with you to church is added to the content of the meal. Your contribution to the gathering helps to make it what it is. Therefore, seek the church where you can roll up your sleeves and help them to minister to others. Don't look for a church that will only "serve you," but look for a church in which you can "serve." Always remember, a church is

the combination of what its people are. So if you want your church to be the best it can be, you must be the best you can be. A church can never rise above what it's individual members are.

10. Be ready to accept the individuality of a church. Frequently people look for a church like the one in which they got saved, or like one they see on TV. But this is futile, because even though a church might have the same beliefs or similarities as another, every church is distinct and different in its personality, just like people are. Always use the Bible as the standard to measure a church — not other churches.

11. Look for a church with reasonable expectations. Don't bother looking for a perfect church, because there aren't any. In every church you will find people who are wonderful and some who aren't. Jesus taught that it was common for weeds to be found growing together with the crops (*Matt. 13:24-30*). Also, in every church, you'll find some things done well, and others that are not. Don't worry about finding a perfect pastor, either. Trust me, they're all human and will make mistakes. But look for a pastor who is sincere, who is trying his best to live a godly moral life, and who is proclaiming the uncompromised Word of God. In short, be content with the church that is doing the best they can.

There are many good churches in your community. Trust the Lord to guide you to the fellowship where he wants you, and become faithful there. Don't be a church hopper — bouncing around to one church after another each week. God wants you to be submitted to the accountability of spiritual leaders who will help you and even correct you when necessary (*Heb. 13:17*), and this isn't possible unless you are rooted somewhere. Don't have a neglectful attitude, going to church only when you feel like it. Attend faithfully and show up on time. Serve your church at least as diligently as you would your employer. Remember, the Lord views your attitude toward His church as your attitude toward Him (*Matt. 25:40*), so serve the Lord in a way that if He were your employer, you wouldn't get fired!

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