

HOW TO CHOOSE A CHURCH

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One of the most important decisions a Christian will make is the choice of a church body to become part of. This will determine the part of the universal Christian family you will spend most of your time with as you worship, serve, learn and grow together as the body of Christ. The ramifications are huge, all things considered, so it is important that you make a wise, Spirit-led decision.

First, be sure of your reason for wanting to find a new church?

- 1) Is there a conflict in your current church that you want to avoid or run from. (If that is the case, I urge you to go back and deal with the situation in a biblical way--see Matt 18:15-20).
- 2) Is there a disagreement with the leadership in the direction the current church is moving? (Go back to the leadership and discuss your concerns with them.)
- 3) Do you feel the current church is not perfect, and you would like to find one that is? (If you find the perfect church, then don't join it—it will not longer be perfect!)
- 4) Do you have a general sense of dissatisfaction with the previous church or feel like you need a “fresh” start. (Again, speak with the leadership about your concerns and seek godly advice from outside the church if needed.)
- 5) Have you moved and the previous church is too far to attend.

If after careful consideration you need to find a new church, then this article is for you. There is literally a smorgasbord of church types, belief systems and worship atmospheres. Here are some things to consider when looking at a potential new church home—a list of mental and spiritual “crowbars” that may pry open your thinking on this subject.

I. BIBLICAL CRITERIA

A. Is this church committed to the four “pillars” of a Biblical local church:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. Ac 2:42-43

1. Sound biblical teaching

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 1 Ti 4:13

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 2 Ti 4:3

- a. Check out their doctrinal statement and read it carefully.
- b. Where do they stand on charismatic/Holy Spirit issues, gender issues, eternal security, baptism, etc. Are they “dispensational” or “reformed” in their orientation to scriptures.

2. Genuine fellowship – do the people enjoy being together and talking about spiritual things even when the meetings are over?

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 1 Jn 1:3

3. Breaking of Bread – is this a significant focus of the church or is it a minor add-on? The early church was devoted to it.

Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” Lk 22:15 (NKJV)

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them,

intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. Ac 20:7

4. **Prayer** – is there genuine prayer taking place by individuals as well as by the body collectively.

And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. Ac 12:12

B. Is this church committed to the great commission (reaching the lost)?

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Mt 28:18-20

C. Is this church committed to discipling and equipping believers?

... go and make disciples ... Matt 28:19

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. Eph 4:11-12

II. MINISTRY CRITERIA

- A. Does the church have a vision statement? What is it?
- B. Does this church believe in qualified, biblical leadership that is shared or does leadership ultimately rest with one individual (whether a single pastor or some other influential person)?
- C. Are you needed at this church? Is there room for your spiritual gift? Can you make a difference? Is there another church that needs your gift? What can you bring to this church that will benefit the body?
- D. Where does this church stand on gender and leadership issues?
- E. In their outreach, who is this church trying to reach?

III. PERSONAL CRITERIA

- A. Is this the best place for your own spiritual growth?
- B. Will you feel comfortable bringing unsaved friends to this church?
- C. Will this be a good place for your family?
- D. Is there an atmosphere of love evident?
- E. Is there a general enthusiasm for the Lord, a vibrant spiritual life?

IV. SECONDARY ISSUES

- A. Style of music
- B. People in similar socio-economic strata of life
- C. Existence of a singles or youth group (which ever is applicable)
- D. Location

V. DOES GOD WANT YOU AT THIS CHURCH?