

Church Shopping

What to look for in a church

Finding a church home can be time-consuming and overwhelming. You must seek wisdom from the Lord and use spiritual discernment as you visit various worship services. Knowing what the Lord expects His Church to look like, as revealed in Scripture, will help you find the church where God is glorified and you are edified.

Tips to help you in your search for a church:

1. Check out the church's website before attending. You can rule out a number of churches based on what you find online.
2. Call the church to find out if the regular preaching pastor will be preaching the week you plan on attending.
3. Pray for the Spirit to lead you to the right place.
4. Learn what the Bible teaches about the Church and find a congregation that is striving to be true to the Word of God.

Here are some of the Biblical truths regarding the Church:

Biblical Truth: Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church

"And [Jesus] is the head of the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy." Colossians 1:18

What to look for in this area:

1. Is Jesus recognized as Head of this church?
2. Does the preaching and song selection proclaim the supremacy of Christ?
3. When I leave the service, I am more impressed with the pastor or worship leader than I am with the Lord?

Biblical Truth: The Church is the pillar and foundation of truth

"Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth." 1 Timothy 3:14-15

What to look for in this area:

1. Is the Bible used in the message? Is the congregation encouraged to use their Bibles?
2. Is the Word of truth handled correctly (2 Timothy 2:15)?
3. Does the church advertise "relevant" messages? Are they saying Scripture is not relevant today?
4. Is the sermon filled with God's Word or man's opinions?
5. Is the entire truth of Scripture proclaimed or does the pastor avoid parts of the Bible that might offend those in attendance?

Biblical Truth: The Church is a house of prayer

"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?"'"

Mark 11:15-16

What to look for in this area:

1. Does the worship service include prayer?
2. Are there any prayer meetings scheduled during the week?
3. Do you see anyone praying for each other before or after the service?

Biblical Truth: The Church is the fellowship of believers

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be there God, and they will be My people.'" 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

What to look for in this area:

1. Are members of the church expected to be believers? Do they ask for your testimony or a faith statement?
2. Is the church service geared more for believers or for non-believers?
3. Do you get a sense that people like each other in this church?
4. Are there programs or services that minister to congregational members?
5. Is it easy for you to slip in and out of church without being greeted by someone?

Biblical Truth: The Church is separate from the world

"What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be there God, and they will be My people. 'Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" 2 Corinthians 6:15-18

What to look for in this area:

1. Are people in the congregation called to holiness?
2. Does the church appear more concerned about your comfort rather than your commitment to Christ?

Biblical Truth: The mission of the Church is to make disciples

"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.'" Matthew 28:18-20

What to look for in this area:

1. Does the church have a strategy for making disciples? Does this strategy emphasize both evangelism and discipleship?
2. The first step of making disciples is evangelism. Does this church have a passion to reach out to the lost with the gospel of Christ?
3. Does the gospel message include repentance, turning away from sin and turning to Jesus?
4. Does the church promote involvement in local missions? How involved does the church appear to be with overseas missions?
5. Does the church have Bible studies or just small groups?
6. Is the congregation called upon to use their gifts and serve in the body of Christ?