

## How to Find a Church

Hebrews 10:25 — *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

But how do you find the right fellowship / church with which to meet?

In one sense it is a lot like finding a spouse ... its best to focus on being the right person, talk to God about what you desire, and walk by faith. God desires you to be in fellowship, to serve, to be a blessing, and to inherit a blessing (1Peter 3:9b).

My goal here is not to be prescriptive as much as to provide you questions for your prayerful consideration as you seek a church home.

But before I get to those questions, remember, churches are full of people, people who are sinners, and hence no church is perfect. And note — earthly perfection often has a context and changes with what God is doing in our lives in a given season of life. As such, it is important to ask the Spirit of Truth, God Himself, to guide you in this important decision.

1. Develop specific, measurable criteria to evaluate how you and your family can contribute to that church's ministry so it is not just another church, but truly a church home.
2. A church's doctrinal position is like the foundation of a building — it needs to be adequate for the purpose of the structure. Jesus said that the wise man builds his house upon rock and the foolish man builds his house upon sand (Matthew 7:24-27). Hence ensure that the foundation of the church you attend is solid in the areas of things that matter — things like: their view of the Bible: doctrinal soundness (ask for and read carefully a church's beliefs statement); the kind, style, and quality of preaching (are believers being fed or entertained); and do the members apply / practice what is preached.
3. Find out what the church's vision, direction and goals are. God has gifted believers to serve His church. How will your gifts, skills, talents, and abilities benefit this local part of the family of God achieve its goals and how easy will it be for you to serve within that local fellowship?
4. Does the church have structures that promote discipleship: small groups for accountability, medium size groups for teaching and learning, as well as worship service(s) that cast vision as well as instruct? If any or all of these structures are missing — how open are the church's leaders to allow (facilitate) you to establish any missing key structural items?
5. Consider the form of church government (Elder-led, pastor alone, congregational wide votes, etc.). Will it be helpful, be neutral, or be a hindrance to your area of ministry? Is there a sense of order as to how things operate — the worship service, ministries, and church facilities?
6. Church size and location may also be factors to consider. Apply the "Goldilocks Principle" to find the size that is right for your style of ministry and the needs of your family unit. If the church is too far away, or difficult to get to, you may not be as active as you want to be.
7. Given you have found a solid foundation and supporting structure, next evaluate the functionality of how these systems are used by the local church. Are these systems fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed? Do they meet the needs of your family? Is God being honored by the church's operations? If so, great, if not — can you help resolve the bottlenecks, and if so, would the church's leadership accept your assistance.

8. Do members exercise their spiritual gifts among the local body of Christ, or do they seem to expect the pastor to do everything? Does the church emphasize evangelism as one of its primary functions? Are local and foreign missions an important part of its ministry? What about discipleship? Do you see church members and leaders seeking to make disciples and reproduce themselves in the lives of others?

9. A strong local church is marked by love. Do the members seem to genuinely care for one another as well as those outside of their church? Do they minister to each other's needs? As you become acquainted with the church, do you sense that the members love one another as Christ commanded? Notice if friendships form easily. Do you feel truly welcomed? Does the atmosphere/culture of the church appeal to you or not? And how about the attitude of those with whom you worship? Attitudes matter: Is there a sense of unity, support, of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others or are attendees all about their rights/values? Is there a desire to grow and live for Christ?

10. Consider how this church would build you in your faith and help you develop as a disciple of Christ. Is the church strengthening your relationship with God? Is the church enabling you to understand Scripture and teaching you scriptural principles for living? Is the church providing avenues through which you can serve? How does this church help you see both local and global needs and provide you a way be involved beyond financial giving to meet those needs?

11. The leadership of the church you choose should be committed to teaching and supporting God's design for the family. Does the church schedule contribute to or take away from the strength of the family?

12. One last area to evaluate — am I right for this church. How will I contribute to this church? Are there opportunities here for me to serve and exercise my spiritual gifts? Does this local body have a need that by God's enabling I can meet? Am I willing to get what the church can do for me, but also what I can do for the Lord as I serve Him in this church? Am I willing to give of my time, money, energy, and prayers to contribute to the success of this church?

While you can spend a lot of time trying to find just the "right" church, doing so is no guarantee of success. Instead of concentrating on finding the "right" church for you, concentrate on living by faith, trusting God to lead you to a church that honors His truths as expressed in the Bible, and where your giftedness is needed and desired by the church leaders. Hopefully the above questions will help your evaluation. Don't let evaluation be the goal, but rather be a step in the process toward the goal of meeting with other believers for edification, encouragement, and growth toward full maturity in Christ. Be fully alive (BIO) in Christ: **B**efore God in meaningful worship, **I**n authentic community with other believers, who together are **O**n mission doing what God, has gifted and called them to do.

The two URLs below provide some additional information and processes to consider:

<http://www.crosswalk.com/family/singles/what-to-remember-when-searching-for-a-church-home.html>

<http://christianity.about.com/od/churchandcommunity/ht/chooseeachurch.htm>