

CORE
QUESTIONS

HOW DO I CHOOSE A CHURCH?

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Finding a good church is important for your spiritual health. The Christian life is personal, but it isn't private. Your personal relationship with Jesus is nourished in the context of the local church.

Local churches should be governed by called, competent men of character ([1 Tim. 3:1-7](#); [Titus 1:5-9](#)). They're charged with proclaiming the word ([2 Tim. 4:1](#)) so that you can be fully equipped to serve Jesus with the gifts he's given to you ([Eph. 4:12](#)).

WHAT ARE THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD CHURCH?

Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). We see a good example of a Spirit-filled church in [Acts 2](#). After the day of Pentecost, the early Christian community devoted itself to four things: The apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and prayer.

A GOOD CHURCH HAS A HIGH VIEW OF SCRIPTURE.

The apostles' teaching, for us today, is the New Testament. Paul told Timothy, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" ([2. Tim. 3:16-17](#)). Because the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, we receive it as God's very word to us ([1 Thess 2:13](#)). This word creates faith in our hearts ([Rom. 10:17](#)). It sets our eyes on Christ crucified for the forgiveness of our sins ([1 Cor. 2:2](#); [Gal. 3:1](#)). Faithful Bible teaching should always point us to Jesus ([John 5:39](#)).

Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you visit a church:

- Is the pastor explaining what the Bible means or expressing his personal opinions?
- Is the sermon pointing me to Jesus Christ and his work for me, or is it mainly a self-help speech?
- Does this church believe that all Scripture is divinely inspired, or do they treat the Bible like a book of fables?
- Does this church shy away from some doctrines in the Bible, like sin, the cross, or the exclusivity of Christ for salvation? Does it seem like it's ashamed of what the Bible teaches?

A GOOD CHURCH IS CHARACTERIZED BY LOVE

"The fellowship" refers to the familial love exhibited by Christ's body. Churches that have a high view of Scripture should be places of humble service. After all, Jesus is the savior who came not to be served, but to serve, and we are his disciples ([Mark 10:35](#); [John 13:1-17](#)).

John said that we can't claim to love God if we don't love the body of Christ ([1 John 4:20](#)). By faith we apprehend the love of God for us in his Son, and we express that love to one another by caring for each other's needs. Good churches reveal God working in them through the love they exhibit ([John 13:35](#); [1 John 4:12](#)). This isn't what the world means by love. but it's how Jesus defined it: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" ([John 15:13](#)). Though it may take time to observe this in practice, healthy churches are places where the members willingly lay down their own lives for the good of others.

A GOOD CHURCH CELEBRATES THE SACRAMENTS

“The breaking of bread” probably refers to the meal that Jesus instituted in the Gospels, the Lord’s Supper. This is a holy ordinance given to us by Jesus, whereby through the signs of bread and wine Jesus Christ and all of his benefits are represented, sealed, and applied to the faithful.

The Lord’s Supper, or Communion, isn’t an empty ritual. It’s a means of experiencing the grace of God in our lives. In this ordinance, we have a special kind of fellowship with Jesus ([1 Cor. 10:16–17](#)). Along with this ordinance, Jesus instituted another ordinance for the church to observe throughout her history: baptism. Good churches are devoted to making disciples the way Jesus taught, by baptizing and teaching people to observe everything he commanded ([Matt. 28:19](#)), including, “Do this in remembrance of me” ([1 Cor. 11:23–25](#)).

A GOOD CHURCH PRAYS

“The prayers” refers to the commitment of the early church to communion with God in prayer. Healthy churches recognize that their mission can’t be accomplished by human strength or clever strategies. The church depends on God for her existence and growth. Therefore, she’s committed to prayer.

TWO LAST THINGS

Here are two other questions you can ask yourself:

- Does this church worship in a biblical manner, observing the ordinances Jesus gave?
- Is it clear that the church cares about the mission given by Christ: Go and make disciples? Are they interested and engaged in outreach/missions? Do they want to see other people experience God’s love and grace, or are they primarily focused on themselves?

No church is perfect, and you may find that you need to visit a church for a while before you’re able to determine if it’s indeed a good church. Don’t give up, and don’t settle for a church that doesn’t prioritize the things that Jesus prioritizes. One last thing to note: maybe you live in an area where there just aren’t many churches to choose from. Don’t let the imperfections of a nearby fellowship keep you from getting plugged in. Prioritize the main things, first Bible preaching. Locate the church closest to you that opens the Bible and explains it in its context. While you may not agree with everything, if Jesus is being exalted through the preaching, then the Spirit of God is at work in the community. Become a part!

DIG DEEPER

SCRIPTURE

- How God works through the local church: [Eph. 4:4–16](#); [John 14:26](#); [Acts 1:8–11](#); [1 Tim. 3:10, 4:2](#); [Ps. 119:176](#); [Matt. 18:12–13](#)
- Church membership: [Acts 2:37–47](#); [Rom. 16:1–16](#); [Acts 14:23, 20:29–30](#); [1 Cor. 6:14–20](#); [Heb. 13:17](#); [1 Tim. 5:12](#); [1 Pet. 5:1–5](#)
- Belonging to a Church: [1 Cor. 12:12–27](#)
- Sacraments: [Matt. 28:19–20](#); [1 Cor. 10:16–17](#); [1 Cor. 11:23–25](#)

FROM CORE RADIO

- [How Should My Family Choose a New Church?](#)

FROM CORE CHRISTIANITY

- [3 Reasons Why Your Pastor's Sermon Should Always Point You to Jesus](#)
- [Is it a Sin to Miss Church](#)
- [How to Be Thankful for Your Messed Up Church](#)
- [What to Look For When Choosing a Church](#)
- [3 Reasons You Need the Church](#)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- [8 Things Everyone Should Know About Church \(Core Guide\)](#)
- [*Grounded in the Gospel* by Gary Parrett and J. I. Packer](#)
- [*Life Together*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#)
- [*Ordinary*, by Michael Horton](#)
- [*The Gospel Comes With a House Key*, by Rosaria Butterfield](#)