

A Heart for the Family. The leadership of the church you choose should be committed to teaching and supporting God’s design for the family (Eph. 5:22--6:4). Do they support the Biblical roles of the husband and wife? Do they come alongside parents and help them as they seek to train and instruct their children? Does the church schedule contribute to or take away from the strength of the family?

CHECKING ITS ENVIRONMENT

Certain observable factors contribute to the overall atmosphere of a local church. Those environmental components are usually manifested in attitudes.

A High View of God. Proverbs 9:10 says, “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” Do the people, from the leadership down, take God seriously and exalt Him in all they do? Their view of God will affect every aspect of their lives and ministry. Ask yourself if God is the focus of their lives or if they’re preoccupied with each other or themselves.

The Presence of a Sincere Faith. Is it obvious to you that the church lives and operates by faith? Are the people willing to trust God (Heb. 11:1)?

Spirit of Sacrifice. Can you see that the church members are willing to sacrifice themselves and their possessions to advance God’s Kingdom (Rom. 12:1)? Do you sense they would sacrifice themselves for one another (Phil. 2:3-4)?

Proper Attitudes Toward the Pastor and Other Leaders. As you talk with the people, be sensitive to how they regard their leaders. Do they appreciate and esteem the pastor and other leaders “*very highly in love because of their work*” (1 Thess. 5:13)? Are they fully behind them, giving their spiritual, emotional, and material support (1 Tim. 5:17-18)?

AM I RIGHT FOR THIS CHURCH?

We have looked at the foundational, structural, functional, and environmental components of a vital, healthy local church. Now look at yourself and ask, “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 give of my time, money, energy, and prayers to contribute to the success of this church?” (Mark 12:30; Rom. 12:1).

A house is not a home until all the members of a family contribute to its success. The same is true of a church home. Only when you exercise your God-given gifts will you feel “at home” in His church.

The decision you make about what church to attend will greatly affect your spiritual life and the lives of your children. In fact, the decisions you make now will affect your grandchildren and the generations to come, for your church home will help shape and mold your children’s beliefs and values. That’s a sobering reality.

Choosing a church home is one of the most significant decisions you will ever make--one that reaches into eternity. May we all spend at least as much time and effort making that decision as we do deciding on our earthly dwelling!



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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A NEW CHURCH HOME



Making Disciples of the
Lord Jesus Christ

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A NEW CHURCH HOME

We've all heard that the choice and purchase of a home is one of the most significant decisions a person will ever make. In this temporal world that may be true. However, choosing your church home, where you and your children will learn the things of God and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, has eternal ramifications.

IS THIS CHURCH RIGHT FOR ME?

What are the Biblical criteria you need to be aware of when considering a new church? Let's compare the search for a new church to that of a new home. When looking for a house, people typically ask, "How much does it cost? Is it large enough for our family? How well is it built?" Similarly, before choosing a church home you need to consider its **foundation, structure, function, and environment**. But before we consider those important components, please realize that no church is going to be perfect. You must seek God's will and be led by the Holy Spirit in selecting a church. Also you need to evaluate how you and your family can contribute to that ministry so it is not just another church, but truly a church home.

INVESTIGATING ITS FOUNDATION

Jesus said that the wise man builds his house upon rock, and the foolish man builds his house upon sand (Matt. 7:24-27). When storms come, the stability of the foundation determines the durability of the structure. There are four main components that make up the foundation of a strong local church:

A Proper View of Scripture When investigating a potential church home, pay particular attention to how it views the Bible. Does it hold to the inspiration, inerrancy, and sufficiency of the Scriptures? Does it believe the Bible is the only rule for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Pet. 1:3)?

An Emphasis on Bible Teaching and Preaching Observe what kind of preaching is done. Is it primarily expository, topical, or evangelistic in nature? Is the main diet repetitive salvation messages every week, or are believers being fed and built up from the Word (Acts 20:27; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5)? There should be a strong commitment to high-quality Bible teaching.

Doctrinal Soundness Just as you would inspect the soundness of a house's foundation, so you should investigate the doctrinal stance of the churches you visit. Where do they stand on such crucial issues of the Christian faith as the virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ; the depravity of mankind; the work of Christ on the cross; His death, burial, and bodily resurrection; salvation by grace alone through faith alone; the Second Coming of Christ; and the ordinances of Baptism and Communion?

Doctrinal Practice Observe whether the church practices the doctrines it claims to believe and teach. As James said to the Church at large, "*Prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves*" (James 1:22; cf. Luke 6:46; John 13:17).

EXAMINING ITS STRUCTURE

Once you are satisfied with the foundational aspects of the church, you need to look at its structural components. The structural components of a local church provide its strength and dictate the character and direction of its ministry. Those components include:

Church Government Find out if the church's leaders function according to New Testament principles (1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-20; Titus 1:4-9; Heb. 13:7, 17). Do they understand the centrality of Christ as Head of the Church and His desire to rule His Church through a plurality of godly men (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col.1:18; 1 Cor. 11:3)?

Evidence of Order The church's ministry, including its services, teaching, and administration, should have an obvious sense of order. As Paul said in speaking of the church's worship service, "*Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner*" (1 Cor. 14:40).

OBSERVING HOW IT FUNCTIONS

When satisfied that the foundation and structure are what they should be, the wise home buyer will then look at how functional the house is. Does it fulfill the purpose for which it was designed? Does it meet the needs of the family?

An Emphasis on Worship As you observe how a church functions, look for *an emphasis on worshipping God*. See if the leadership stresses the importance of honoring and glorifying God in all things (1 Cor. 10:31; Col.3:17).

A Marked Care for their People A strong local church is marked by *love*. Do the members seem to genuinely care for one another? Do they minister to each other's needs (1 Thess. 5:14)? Also observe *the involvement of the individual members*. Do they exercise their spiritual gifts among the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11), rather than expecting the pastor to do everything?

A Passion for Evangelism and Discipleship Evangelism is one of the primary functions of the Church. Are home and foreign missions an important part of the church's ministry (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8)? What about discipleship? Do you see church leaders and members seeking to make disciples and helping younger Christians to grow into mature believers (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 2:3-7; Matt. 28:19-20)?