



It is extremely important that Christians find a local body of believers and assemble on a regular basis with them. Both fellowship and the “iron sharpens iron” aspects of having good relationships with other Christians are critical for the maturing process. Unfortunately, the vast majority of professing Christian Churches today are legalistic and heretical. It can be a very difficult and time-consuming process to find a good church. The most important aspects of finding a Church are their doctrine and their leadership structure. You must never compromise on doctrinal issues that are biblically sound and you’re confident about...That’s the definition of “luke warm”...Just going along with whatever is presented. There are also several other non-doctrinal and “personal preference” issues that should be taken into account including drive-time, age group issues (children and teen needs), music preference, etc.

Recommended Search Process

1. **INITIAL SEARCH:** With the advent of the internet, finding a good church is easier than ever. Your main search should be focused on: “Christian Church”. Realize that there are many cults (ex. Mormons, Roman Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.) that call themselves Christian, so you’ll need to ignore these types of search results. You also need to avoid certain Christian denominations due to their inherent doctrinal issues and legalism. **Denominations to avoid are:** Catholic, Anglican, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Orthodox, Methodist, Church of Christ, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, and Nazarite. The main churches to focus on in most areas will have names including the word: Evangelical, Baptist, Bible, or Christian. There are also “Community” and “Congregational” churches that may have good doctrine and leadership. Write down (or make a spreadsheet) with a list of all the churches in your area that seem to be worthy of review.
2. **DOCTRINE:** Once you have a list, the next and most important step is reviewing their doctrine. Go to their website and look for their “Statement of Faith”, “Doctrinal Statement”, or “What We Believe”. You MUST agree with EVERYTHING or you should not go to the church. They may not address certain important topics like Baptism, The Trinity, Lord’s Supper, Loss of Salvation, etc. You should call, e-mail, or meet with the Pastor if you have any unanswered questions about important issues.

Important Doctrinal Issues Include:

- a) Salvation by grace through faith alone (no other required works especially not baptism or speaking in tongues).
- b) Jesus Christ is the Son of God, is equal to God, and is both man and God.
- c) God exists as a single “Trinity” composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are unique and equal.
- d) Baptism is full underwater immersion for believers only (no infants or babies) and is NOT required for salvation.
- e) The Lord’s Supper is symbolic of Christ’s sacrifice and is not taken literally as His actual flesh and blood.
- f) Giving is done freely, joyfully, and sacrificially but is not commanded (no required tithing).
- g) Membership should be optional and not “pushed” onto people...Requiring membership is non-scriptural.
- h) Salvation is “Secure” for true believers – You can’t lose your salvation and don’t have to work to maintain it!

3. **LEADERSHIP:** The Second most important thing beyond proper doctrine are the church leaders. A small church (less than 25 people) may have only one leader; however, in larger churches, having multiple leaders is better for accountability and diversity. There are only two leadership positions defined in the bible: “Bishop” (referred to as Overseer, Elder, or Pastor) and “Deacon”. Most churches have one “Pastor” and several “Elders” and they MUST be men. It’s extremely important to realize that even though they call these people by different names, it’s biblically the same position. The Elders need to meet all of the requirements set forth in (**Titus 1:5-9, 1st Timothy 3:1-7 and 1st Peter 5:1-4**) and be able to teach. The elders shouldn’t just be a bunch of “head bobbers” that pray in a closet and make administrative decisions. It’s also recommended that ministry leaders be qualified Deacons (or Deaconesses) and not just anyone who has a desire to lead (See **1st Timothy 3:8-13**).
4. **LEGALISM (RULES):** It’s important to discern any written (or unwritten) non-biblical rules or forms of legalism that may be prevalent in the church.

Things to avoid include (Please Note the Word “Requirement”):

- a) Requirement to be “Dressed Up” for church.
- b) Requirement to tithe.
- c) Requirement to take vows.
- d) Requirement to rest on Sunday (or one day a week).
- e) Requirement to fill out paperwork and become a member.
- f) Requirement to use only one translation of the bible (usually King James Version).
- g) Requirement that instruments cannot be used for music.
- h) Rules against types of music (ex. only hymns and no contemporary).

5. **PERSONAL PREFERENCES:** There are several “personal preference” issues that may be taken into account when searching for a church. These are things that should not necessarily eliminate a church but they play a role in your “personal comfort”.

Personal Preference Examples:

- a) Driving distance from home to the church.
- b) Type/Style of music (hymns vs contemporary, band vs. acapella, etc.).
- c) Age groups (you may have specific requirements based on children as well as your own requirement for friends of your age).
- d) Ministry options (you may have a desire for or against certain types of ministries).
- e) Desire for participation in “Home/Small Groups”.
- f) You need to feel “accepted” and a “part of the group” (This requires effort on your part and may take some time).