



Are You Looking for a “Good” Church?

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. — Acts 2:42

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. — Hebrews 10:23-25

When it comes to that time leading up to the final sequence of events unmistakably associated with the Second Coming, Christ and the Apostles teach that what is important for Christians at **any** time or age of history is **especially** important for the End Times Christian. In the wake of the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, the earliest congregants were focused on coming together for the primary purpose of the Word (“the apostles’ teaching”), “fellowship”, communion (“the breaking of bread”), “and to prayer”. Such is even more important in the shadow of Christ’s imminent return, but admittedly, these are not the activities most often advertised, much less offered, in far too many Western gatherings.

A number of ministries I am familiar with have all expressed a shared phenomenon in recent years, that the most frequently asked question received through their respective websites and telephones is something along the lines, “Do you know of a good church in my area?” In some cases these are people coming out of churches led by outright false teachers or enslaved to any of a number of patently false movements, and for others exiting what began as a sound fellowship but for one reason or another wobbled out of its orthodox orbit. They almost always mention that they’re seeking a place featuring “sound, biblical teaching”.

So why can’t they find something on their own and feel they must resort to sending an email to a website or posting such a request on Facebook? Have the number of sound churches and fellowships fallen so low that they really can no longer be easily found?

I'm not going to offer a solution that will apply to everyone 100%, but having processed more than my share of these requests, please consider whether or not some of the following personally fits your particular situation.

Numerically, there are still a **LOT** of churches not just in America but in your particular city and surrounding area. How many of them did you **REALLY** visit? I know it can get very tiresome very quickly checking out a different place week after week, but in all probability you probably haven't actually visited every possibility. (If you visited 10, you're way above normal.) And of the number of churches you visited, why did you choose **those** particular ones? Did they happen to be the largest in your community? The most popular or talked about? Did you assume that only a larger than average church would naturally be home to a "good" Bible-preaching teacher or meaningful fellowship?

Two of the best Bible teachers I know have churches whose Sunday morning attendance does not regularly exceed 40-50 bodies in the pews. I guarantee if you'd regularly sit under their prolonged teaching and influence you would truly mature into the biblical Christian we all know we should be. But the "good" teachers—that is, those who don't just talk about righteousness but walk it personally—rarely have large churches. They have a long-term vision and mission when it comes to discipleship. The odds are that what you are looking for is not going to be either big or popular.

I have come to believe that finding the right place begins with a specific personal prayer requesting a sound teacher, someone who not only provides the right material from the pulpit, but whose very lifestyle of adherence to God's Word and ways engenders the additional staples of fellowship, communion and prayer. Numerical growth over longer periods of time is realistically possible in such environments, but such will rarely ever experience popularity or instant numerical attraction.

The fact is that you do, indeed, need sound Bible teaching which is only going to come from someone producing biblically qualified fruit. But have you noticed exactly what **biblical** fruit is?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. — Galatians 5:22–23

"Are You Looking for a 'Good' Church?", Page 2 of 4

These are not qualities which attract large numbers; these are not qualities which are popular; these are not qualities you will find in a cursory visit or a single sermon; these are not qualities easily measured from a distance. This is why I suggest beginning with the prayerful request to be directed specifically to someone so some amount of time can then be invested to understand the kind of harvest taking place in that particular setting. Maturing believers are not supposed to be itinerant visitors.

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers. — Psalm 1:2-3*

So many of these requests come from people who are carrying a bit of extra baggage. Having just experienced a bad teacher, they want someone automatically sanctified as good. But a biblical fellowship is a joint operation where everyone is actually involved in the ministry, not to mention each others' lives. You shouldn't just be seeking something which will minister **TO** you, but people with whom you can mutually minister. All too often a very large church is a way to disappear into the background rather than set yourself on God's appointed path to personal ministry. It's not entirely about finding a place which will provide a pleasant listening experience, but engender personal and permanent involvement.

*Now there are **varieties of gifts,** but the same Spirit. And there are **varieties of ministries,** and the same Lord. There are **varieties of effects,** but the same God who works all things in all persons. **But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** — 1 Corinthians 12:4-7*

But there's an especially disconcerting segment of people who, after finally being rescued from the worst false movements and false teachers, come to believe they really don't need another leader. This is often reinforced by their survey of the large and popular churches in their area, likewise infected with some variation of what they just came out of, and so they think they can just start their own fellowship. I would never discourage any size group of believers desiring to get together for fellowship, communion and/or prayer, but when it comes to "devoting themselves to the Apostles' teaching"? It will only successfully work if there is someone in the group who can actually teach.

"Are You Looking for a 'Good' Church?", Page 3 of 4

Such constructs may be temporarily necessary, but again I strongly encourage you to pray for the Lord to direct you to someone specific, even if just for the time required to get the proper training in Scripture so as to legitimately lead such a fellowship. I am not a big advocate of seminaries or Christian universities, but rather discipleship which instills how to study and teach the whole counsel of God's Word. Time and again I have witnessed those who have come out of very bad situations, only to ultimately end up worse than before because they now think they can do it themselves.

The cure for a "bad" church is not no church, but "good" church; the cure for a "bad" teacher is not no teacher, but a "good" teacher; the cure for "bad" teaching is not my own teaching, but learning how to produce "good" teaching. And while there is most likely someone in your vicinity who can accomplish this, he's probably not operating a numerically large fellowship. He might not even have much, if anything, going out on YouTube or Facebook. But you'll never be introduced to them if you don't prayerfully ask to be directed to the right shepherd, regardless of how he might look to the material eye.

In Him,

Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org