

What to Look for in a Church

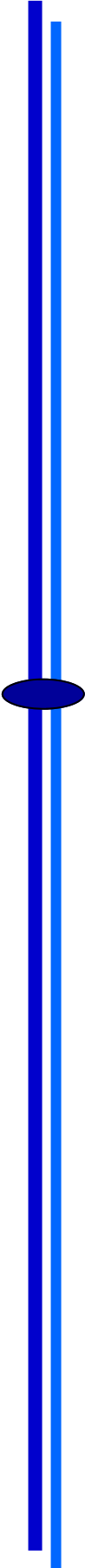
Finding a church home ranks as one of life's most important decisions. The decision on where to go to build a relationship with the Savior must not be taken lightly. As with other things in life, making a rash decision about where to attend can bring about heartache; regret, and even threaten your soul! So here you are—knowing what you need to do—knowing that you need to be part of a Bible centered, family oriented group of believers. But yet, a look across the landscape of today's religious world is one that seems quite confusing and even discouraging!! There are so many churches "competing" for your membership, so many offering a wide array of social activities, and sadly so many changing their beliefs to accommodate the greatest amount of people. So, what to do? What are things to keep in mind when looking for a church?

Look for a church that is committed to preaching and teaching just what the Bible says. Is this church working to have a *biblical identity*? This will be the kind of church that endeavors to follow Jesus and do what he said! The Apostle Paul wrote, *Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.* (Colossians 3:17 TEV) This involves holding up the Scriptures as the standard! Churches that do this urge their members to conform their lives and religious practices to that which is found within the Bible! We must remember that God wants us to do what He said to do, not as we please! We must believe that the Bible can give us *all* the answers to life's big and complex problems. Sadly, many in religion today believe exactly the opposite. This has led to conforming God's word with our modern ways of thinking. Some are now changing long held positions on homosexuality, abortion, the role of women in the church, as well as other important issues. This leads to all sorts of confusion, discouragement, and trouble! The Bible says, *God does not want us to be in disorder but in harmony and peace* (1 Corinthians 14:33 TEV). God wants us to have peace of heart and mind! This *can* be accomplished when a church seeks a *biblical identity*.

Look for a church that has a clear understanding of its mission. What are its goals and plans for the future? What is it doing NOW to meet them? A key component in a church's mission is to seek and save the lost! This was the mission of Jesus. Luke 19:10 says, *The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*" (TEV) Ask yourself: *is this church primarily interested in meeting my spiritual needs?* So many religious organizations today are in to impressing the world with huge building complexes that mainly appeal to the physical needs of man. The mission of the church Jesus died for must be on reaching the lost with the good news that their sins can be forgiven and that heaven can be theirs!

It is also a good idea to check out what a church teaches concerning God's plan of salvation! Does this church emphasize the grace of God in providing salvation for mankind? (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14) Equally important, do they teach *all* of God's plan of salvation? One can look back to the New Testament and see how the first century Christians were saved. We can be saved in the same way! Does this church stress the need for belief (John 8:24), repentance (Luke 13:3), confession (Romans 10:10), and baptism (Acts 22:16)? If a church does not teach that all of these elements are necessary for salvation it is *not* a Bible-centered church!

Another key component in a church's mission must be to train people to be like Jesus! Jesus said, *No pupil is greater than his teacher; but every pupil, when he has completed his training, will*



be like his teacher. (Luke 6:40 TEV) Christians must work to become like Jesus! A Bible oriented church will help people conform their lives to the principles of Christian living. This is where people truly care and can give practical advice on how to help you make a change for the better in daily life! Christians in a bible centered church will be more than Christians in name only! They truly care and only want the best for you. Their goal will be to *stand together with you in your faith in Christ.* Other Christians should help you *live in union with him, Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith.* (Colossians 2:5-7 TEV) In a Christ centered church, you should find those who are eager to tell everyone about Jesus! Peter wrote: *But you are the chosen race, the King's priests, the holy nation, God's own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his own marvelous light.* (1 Peter 2:9 TEV)

Look for a church where you can share in a sense of family. Is there an atmosphere of love and warmth? Do you see a constant expression of love toward God and others? Our heart must be full of love for God and for fellow man! This is the teaching of Jesus. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.'* (Matthew 22:37-39 TEV) This will be a place where brotherly love is the standard—not an abnormality! Is there a warm and pleasant atmosphere when you walk through the door? Can you see people that truly want to help each other get to heaven?

What are you looking for in the *right* church? If you are looking for a church home I hope you will strongly consider getting to know us better here at Brownsburg church of Christ. We invite you to examine our practices in light of God's word and please know we're always ready to answer any question you have. I look forward to hearing from you!

Matthew Allen
mhallen@brownsburgchurch.info