

# Choosing a Church

## What is church?

Church is the "body of Christ." It can be a group of two or three Christians meeting in a house, or an assembly of hundreds meeting in a beautiful sanctuary. According to Matthew 18:19-20, as long as we gather together in Jesus' name, He will be in our midst.

## Why is church membership so important?

As a Christian, it is essential to your spiritual growth to fellowship with other believers (Hebrews 10:25). We should not be isolated from the rest of the body of Christ, but should share our gifts and our wisdom for the benefit of all (1 Corinthians 12:7). Worshipping together unites our voices and spirits in praise. Hearing the Word of God from the pulpit feeds us scripturally and spiritually. Congregational prayer encourages the sharing of our burdens, while drawing support and strength from members of our church "family." ("Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ." Galatians 6:2) Finally, testimonies about God's work in the lives of others encourages our faith.

## How do you find a local church that is right for you?

Finding a church that is right for you and your family is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, and then consider the following important factors:

**Fellowship** Most active churches conduct Sunday morning and evening worship and mid-week services. Other opportunities for fellowship should involve people of all ages, such as children's clubs, youth groups and adult gatherings. Church picnics, vacation Bible school, and annual Christmas and Easter programs often contribute to the year's activities. Bible studies or home fellowship groups will help you meet other church members and help you to grow in your faith. Children shouldn't be left out, either. Look for clean facilities and attentive, caring children's ministry workers. Older children will eagerly attend and participate in a lively Sunday School with a strong emphasis on Christian training.

**Leadership** Can you respect the pastor? Are the church leaders demonstrating a life style you would want to follow? (Hebrews 13:17). They should know God and believe and preach the Bible.

**Ministry** How can you minister to others? Look for a place where you can not only be served, but one where you can serve and contribute your talents. Aside from teaching and singing, many churches need people with organizational, leadership and planning skills.

**Doctrine** Select a church that believes that the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of Christians today. This view includes the power of prayer for salvation, healing and God's intervention in the lives of individuals. A time of worship, praise and prayer should be a central part of the service. Not to be overlooked are a strong missions program and outreach to the disadvantaged.

**Church Size** Whether you choose a small or a large church depends on your personal and family needs and on where the Holy Spirit guides you. The intimacy of a smaller church offers a greater opportunity for individual care and a chance to develop relationships within the body. Larger churches possess the capacity, financing, talents, numbers and other resources to undertake larger projects.

Ultimately, you should worship in a place where you feel the presence and the power of God. Through His power, you will grow and develop into the person God wants you to be, ready to meet the challenges of daily living. And as an active member of a church family, your life will also be enriched through the many blessings and the transforming power of united worship.

*Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard translation of the Bible.*

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