

## ***What Should You Look For In a Church?***

*by: Kris Brewer*

With the invention of thousands of denominations and religious institutions has come the inevitable result of people “church shopping.” They begin to look for a church, and in the process they typically have certain criteria they expect. The question could be asked: “What are you looking for in a church?” There would be as many answers to that question as people asked! Some would say they are looking for a church where the people are a lot like them (same socioeconomic class, same race, same age, etc.). Some would say that they are looking for a church that offers the most extracurricular activities for their kids (sports, plays, clubs, etc.). Some would say that they are looking for some particular type of worship environment (traditional, contemporary, modern praise, etc.).

Usually, at some point, most people will say that they are looking for a “Bible believing church.” This seems to indicate that they think there are churches

that identify as “Christian” who do not believe the Bible.

Unfortunately, when we examine what most people are looking for in a church, it boils down to a lot of very selfish criteria. They are essentially saying that they are looking for all the things that will make them feel good, make them happy. Rarely, in answering this question, are the desires of God even taken into consideration!

With this study, we want to consider what a person ought to look for when it comes to considering a church. What should be looked for is often quite different than what is looked for!

***You should look for the Lord's church...***

What the church looks like should not be controlled by the desires of mankind, but rather by the desires of the Lord who founded it. Jesus made it clear, while he was on this earth, that He was

establishing His church:

*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)*

When people are looking for a church, they should be intent on finding one that looks like what the Lord instituted, not one that has been so changed as to be unrecognizable to that first generation of Christians that received the Lord's instructions! While there are many churches that seek to identify with Jesus the Christ, when they are examined against His instructions (both His own words and those revealed through the Holy Spirit to the inspired writers (John 14:25-26, Ephesians 3:1-7)) it is clear that they do not really belong to Him! Jesus made it clear that those who would be His disciples must be obedient to His instructions:

*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."  
(John 8:31-32)*

*"If you love Me, keep My commandments. (John 14:15)*

Churches that are not keeping the commands of the Lord are not His church, no matter what type of claim they might make!

***You should look for a church that is focused on spiritual things, not physical...***

Many churches today are focused on providing for the physical desires of people rather than their spiritual needs. Examine nearly any invitation to a "religious" function, and it becomes painfully obvious that people are more concerned with physical desires than with spiritual instruction. Headlining the advertisement is often either entertainment or meals. I recently saw an event put on by a church which garnered the following comment from an observer: "Fun, Food and Jesus! Just what we need!" It was clear that the event was very

## **Study Opportunities**

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM

Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

## **Meeting At**

Homewood Suites of Bozeman  
1023 E Baxter Ln,  
Bozeman, MT 59715

***Everyone Welcome!***

heavy on fun and food, but very light on Jesus! In fact, by scanning the photos, one would never be able to tell if it were a church function or a community carnival!

Unfortunately, since most people are looking to fulfill their own desires, many religious groups tailor their activities to appease those desires. Bible studies do not draw a lot of interest, but spaghetti dinners and ice cream socials do. This has caused even worship assemblies to be converted into entertainment venues. Instead of Bible study, there are motivational speeches. Instead of “singing and making melody in your hearts,” there are rock concerts. Instead of spiritual feasts, there are social meals. New Testament Christians did not appeal to physical desires to draw attention to themselves or to the church. Their appeal was not to fill stomachs, but rather to bring people to the Lord and heal their spiritual woes.

Paul wrote to the brethren at Colossae concerning this very concept:

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)*

Our focus should be on the spiritual realm! That is where our true battle lies, and we will have our hands full fighting the good fight (Ephesians 6:10-20).

***You should look for a church that will help you grow spiritually...***

This is a challenge for many people because they have been trained to look for a church that will tell them what they want to hear, and ultimately make them “feel good” about themselves. Such an approach does not encourage spiritual growth, but rather spiritual atrophy. A church that is following the Lord will help its members see sinful practices in their lives so that they can grow to be more like the Lord. God Himself intends for His people to be chastened (i.e., corrected):

*And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers*

*of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:5–11)*

There are many religious leaders, and therefore churches, that have determined that they are not going to condemn any kind of sinful practice. They declare that they are only going to “show love” in their teaching. The problem is, they do not understand that true, biblical love demands that sin be addressed so that those practicing can repent and re-establish a relationship with God! Sin is what separates a person from God, so accepting and maintaining sinful practices ensures only that our relationship with God remains fractured.

*Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. (Isaiah 59:1–2)*

When looking for a church, it is important to find one that will use the scriptures to show the type of life the follower of Christ is supposed to live. That does not mean that every member is perfect. No one is perfect, but there is a vast difference between those who see the image of holiness described in the pages of the New Testament and seek to conform to it, and those who choose to ignore God's true desire for their lives and continue in their sinful practices without any sign of remorse. Religious leaders that justify sinful practices are not serving the Lord, but rather their own desires.

***You should look for a church that will cause you to be more like Christ...***

Being faithful is not just about expelling sin from one's life. There is more to the Christian life than the “thou shalt nots” that are clearly established in scripture. There are also the positive things that should become a part of our lives. Peter, for example, wrote about things that should be added to the Christian's life:

*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5–8)*

Adding these characteristics to our faith is not merely the end in and of itself. As we add these things to our lives, we become more and more like Christ. Paul gave similar instructions throughout his epistles, making it clear that we are to expel

sin and conform to righteousness. Ephesians 4:15 indicates that Christ is our measuring stick. If we have not reached that measure, then we still have work to do. We need to be joined to a local congregation that can help us grow in that direction!

There are many criteria used to choose a church in today's religious environment. If we are serious about being the people of God, we need to look to the criteria that are important to Him, rather than those that are important to us. In reality, His criteria should become the criteria that is important to us! If you are looking for the type of church described here, contact us today! We are trying to be what God desires!

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A woman decides she needs to lose weight and develop a healthier lifestyle. She learns about nutrition and exercise. She begins a diet plan and adds physical activity into her daily life. She relies on Christian friends to encourage her. She delves into Bible study, and even begins to teach ladies' and children's Bible classes. Her social media posts reflect a changing attitude, with her goals focused on becoming a healthier person physically and a stronger person spiritually. She posts Bible verses and study opportunities. She does what she can to help other people. She gets down sometimes, but she focuses on God and on her Christian friends, and her self confidence grows as she grows spiritually. She is now healthier in body and in spirit.

The first example has an obsession: herself, her body, her own desires. The second has a balance: working to make herself healthier is part of her overall goal of serving God.

When we let anything consume us, we have a problem. The care of our bodies is important, but should be kept in perspective. Our only obsession should be serving God and attaining eternal life!

*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Galatians 6:7-9)*

# What is Your Obsession?

*Ladies*

*Corner*

*by: Cynthia Brewer*

Anything can become an obsession. There are things that consume our time and thought to which we become devoted. There is a danger in becoming more devoted to anything than we are to God. Over the years there has been much talk of letting worldly things consume us. Parents have let their children become so involved in sports that they play in soccer tournaments instead of being at worship services on Sundays. Parents and children have been so focused on grades and extracurricular activities that many hours are spent on secular education, while a few hurried minutes are spent filling in answers to a Bible class lesson. Men and women have put so much effort into their careers that they work long hours and spend little time with their families. As these types of things consume us, other things are neglected: worship services, Bible study, teaching opportunities, families, and friends. Spiritual things are pushed down on the priority list, and worldly things take over.

Lately I have noticed something else with which many people are becoming obsessed: physical health. Diet plans, nutrition, exercise, organic food, GMOs, essential oils, vaccinations...the list goes on. With so much focus on physical health, it is obvious what is being neglected: spiritual health. Worship services, Bible study, teaching opportunities, families, and friends are being neglected, just as they are when worldly activities take over our lives. Of course we are supposed to take care of ourselves physically. Eating nutritionally, being physically active, treating medical conditions, and getting enough rest are all important. Just as there is nothing wrong with playing sports, getting good grades, or having a good job, there is nothing wrong with trying to lose weight, learning about nutrition, working out, or any other health related pursuits. The problem comes when these areas are the main focus of our lives—our time and our thoughts are consumed with them.

Paul says that our focus should be on heavenly things, not earthly things:

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)*

Christ is our life! He gives us physical life and spiritual life. As you read through the rest of Colossians 3, our spiritual well being is addressed. We are given instructions about how to act and how to treat other people. There are no diet or exercise tips.

Spiritual health is the priority.

Paul addresses physical exercise in 1 Timothy 4:6-8:

*If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*

First, notice what Paul says Timothy would be nourished in: “words of faith and of the good doctrine.” Healthful physical nourishment is important, but not to the neglect of nourishing our souls. Is more time spent reading books and blogs about nutrition, or reading the word of God to nourish our souls? Next, Paul tells Timothy that physical exercise does profit him, but there is something more important: exercising towards godliness—spiritual exercise! Godliness is not just a little profit, but is “profitable for all things,” in this life and in the life to come! Is more time spent working out at the gym, or exercising our minds and hearts toward the characteristics God wants us to have?

In Hebrews 5:13-14, we read more about spiritual exercise:

*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

In order to grow spiritually, we must exercise our senses. We must understand what God says about good and evil. This exercise involves studying His word and practicing it. Note the writer says “by reason of use.” Just like not using the muscles of our bodies causes them to become weak, not using our spiritual senses causes them to become weak. Many people are more concerned about exercising their muscles than about exercising their spirits. An obsession with physical exercise will result in strong bodies and weak souls.

To clarify the balance that can and should be found with physical and spiritual nutrition and exercise, consider the following two examples:

A woman decides she needs to lose weight and develop a healthier lifestyle. She learns about nutrition and exercise, and goes to specialists in these areas for advice and training. She begins eating better and exercising regularly. Her social media posts reflect a changing attitude, with a complete focus on herself—her physical training and eating. As she progresses, she is very successful in having a healthier body.

# ***Daily Bible Reading***

## ***November 2016***

November 1	Psalms 75-77	November 16	Psalms 107
November 2	Psalms 78	November 17	Psalms 108-110
November 3	Psalms 79-82	November 18	Psalms 111-115
November 4	Psalms 83-85	November 21	Psalms 116-118
November 7	Psalms 86-88	November 22	Psalms 119:1-48
November 8	Psalms 89-90	November 23	Psalms 119:49-112
November 9	Psalms 91-95	November 24	Psalms 119:113-176
November 10	Psalms 96-100	November 25	Psalms 120-128
November 11	Psalms 101-103	November 28	Psalms 129-133
November 14	Psalms 104-105	November 29	Psalms 134-137
November 15	Psalms 106	November 30	Psalms 138-141

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