

5 Options For Those Looking for a Biblical Church

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Well, one of the questions that we get on a regular basis, through I'll Be Honest, e-mails that I receive and phone calls... people are constantly wondering what to do if they don't have a good church where they are. Many times they are calling to ask if we know of a good church where they are, or they're asking the question "What do I do? I don't know about any good churches." And basically I think you have 5 options... at least the way I've thought through this thing.

The first thing is, you can do nothing. If you're in a situation where you don't believe you have a good church, if you do nothing and you're not in a church at all. That seems to be contrary to Hebrews 10:24 that says that "we shouldn't forsake to meet together," so that's not a good option.

If you actually do have a church, you just don't think it's a very good one, and you're trying to find a better one, and you don't do anything then you basically are staying right where you are and you have to give consideration to this: Why is the church you're in bad? Is it because there's sin allowed there? Is it because there's bad doctrine allowed there? And doing nothing about that, the Lord addresses those churches in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3 that allowed either bad practice or sin in the church and He blamed the whole church, so doing nothing there doesn't seem like a good option either. So, you can do that but it doesn't seem that that's where you want to be. You don't want to stay there.

So, what would the second choice be? Well, the second thing that you can do is try to find a good church where you are and maybe say, "Well, I've already looked." Just because you've already looked doesn't mean there's not one already there. I think a couple things to keep in mind are this, one: you're not likely going to find John Piper preaching right down the street. And so it's really important, especially in light of all the preachers that are on the Internet right now... that you're not setting the standard too high, you're looking for a truly biblical church, not necessarily for John Piper or John MacArthur. So you don't want to set the standard too high.

The other thing I would to say is this: pray. Really ask the Lord to show you where a church like this might be. If there's one there, the Lord knows it's there and the Lord certainly wants his people functioning together in healthy churches. And so, ask the Lord. Don't overlook this. Don't count this as a minor matter. In fact, a season of prayer and fasting might be very healthy in seeking the Lord for this. A very important part of your life. Seek the Lord.

The other thing that I would say in trying to find a good church is use the tools that are out there, like I'll Be Honest. I'll Be Honest has a recommended church list. Johnny Farese, Farese.com has a list of reformed Baptist churches. 9marks, they have, I think they have a church listing. The Founders, Southern Baptist, they have church listings. You can call. If there's a preacher that you really like, you admire, you find profitable, call them, call their church. You

like John Piper? Call his church. Find out if they know of somebody or somebody on their staff knows of somebody where you live. Use the resources that are out there.

The other thing is, it's really important, if you're going to look for a good church, that you know what a good church is. And what are you looking for if you're looking for a good church? The kinds of things you want to be looking for is this: Do they have a high view of the Bible? Really important. A high view of Christ. Do they practice church discipline? Are they evangelistic? It's really important. Do they pray? Those are just some of the basic things that you really want to look for in a good church.

So, we have the first one. You can do nothing, you can look for a good church right where you are.

Another thing that you might think about is that you could start a church where you are. Now that one is intimidating to most people because most people have the idea, "Well, to have a church, we have to have a pastor, and I'm not a pastor." Well, a lot of churches were started in the New Testament in the book of Acts, without elders and deacons. That's how churches start many times. You could go into Acts 16. You could look at the church at Philippi. You had a few people converted. They began to meet together. Jesus says in Matthew 18... he speaks about 2 or 3 gathered together in His name. Truth is, you don't need buildings, you don't need pastors, you need your Bible and some God-fearing people and you can begin to open up that Word. You can sing together. You can pray together. You can start on a very small basis at first.

And as far as starting a church, that's something that we are really are very interested in and if there's anybody out there who would like to start a church it just seems really intimidating, please email us, give us a call. We'd love to help you in any way we can in trying to start something like that if you would be minded to do that. So that would be the third thing.

The fourth option that you might want to consider would be, if you are already in a church but you don't think it's a good church, you could seek to reform that church from the inside. Rather than just try to move on somewhere else, you can seek to biblically try to initiate the changes in the church that would bring that bad church into the condition of being a good church. And it's true, there are bad churches and there are good churches. And typically what makes a church bad is because they have practices and teachings that aren't biblical, they don't line up with holiness... sin is allowed, bad teaching is allowed. And the Bible tells us how to deal with sin in the church. Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Thessalonians. There are a number of places where we see how we are to deal with sin. And then we're told also how to deal with false teaching. And by the way, even if the error or false teaching is in the leadership, the elders, the pastors... it can be approached, it can be dealt with. The Bible gives us the way to deal with that. You want to carefully study 1 Timothy, chapter 5. It tells how to approach elders, how to rebuke elders. There's even a place for publicly rebuking elders.

If you're going to try to reform a church from the inside, you need to count the cost. You're going to need to be very prayerful. You need to be humble. You need to pick your battles extremely carefully. You need to seek to move through the biblical passages and the biblical processes for carrying this out. And it will not be an easy path, most likely, but that is most definitely the fourth option.

The fifth option is: you can pack up and go to where a good church is. And again, just like seeking a good church where you are, if you pack up and move to where there is a good

church, likewise, you need to know what a good church is. And so, just like I mentioned before, some of the characteristics of a good church, you definitely want to make sure those things are in place.

And by the way, just because you like the preaching or the teaching of a certain church on the Internet does not automatically mean that that is a good church and that if you move there you're going to find that everything you think that it is, simply by their teaching on the Internet. So make sure you find out about a church before you move there. Absolutely go visit it first. But those are the options.

So basically you have: you can do nothing. You can seek a good church right where you are. You can seek to plant a church where you are. You can seek to reform a not so good church from the inside. Or you can pack up and move to where a good church is. Those are the five options.