

15 Questions to Ask When Searching for a Church

1. Have you prayed about it?

No, really. Have you prayed about it? Oftentimes we assume that Jesus wants what we want. He might. Or, He might have something even better in mind - but, it may look entirely different than what you expect.

2. Do they love Jesus?

Is it clear the church worships Jesus Christ? Is Jesus' name mentioned regularly? Is the music sung to Jesus? Does the preaching centre around the person and work of Jesus? Is Jesus not merely assumed, but demonstrably loved?

3. Do they preach and teach (faithfully) out of the bible?

Do they care about healthy, sound doctrine? Is the Bible opened during the sermon? Is the sermon itself clearly taken from the text or just used as a launching pad for some other topic? Is it clear the Bible is loved and trusted as the Word of God? Is it apparent that the church cares about what is true about God, as opposed to what is false? Is the teaching primarily man-centred or God-centred?

4. Is the gospel clearly presented?

The gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ to live our life and die our death, in our place, for the forgiveness of sin. Does the church believe and preach this? Is the gospel applied to both Christians and non-Christians? Is it cherished and clearly proclaimed?

5. Are the leaders characterized by humility and integrity?

As the leaders go, so does the church. Though imperfect, are the leaders marked by the "fruit of the Spirit"? Are the leaders qualified according to [1 Timothy 3](#) and [Titus 1](#)? Does the culture of the church tend toward pride and moralism or humility and grace?

6. Is this a church where God's people strive to live by God's Word?

Is Jesus actually followed, not just talked about? Is there a sincere genuine desire among God's people to live in obedience and holiness? Is there a tangible hunger and thirst after righteousness?

7. What happens beyond Sundays?

Don't let Sunday define the church. There are six other days of the week. Some churches are able to pull off a big production every Sunday, but there is little depth otherwise. Others may have a weak Sunday presence, with great depth. Look beyond Sundays.

8. Is the church on Jesus' mission or on their own?

Do you hear more about all the great things the church is doing or all the great things that Jesus is doing? Who has centre stage? Is Jesus used to prop up the mission of the church? Or is the mission of the church to point to Jesus?

9. What is the community like?

The church is a people, not a place. Does the church life and mission reflect that? It can take time to get to know people. As you narrow down your options, take one month to get involved in the life of a church before making a final decision. Get to know people. Meet the pastor(s). Join a community.

10. How are you gifted to serve the church?

Keep in mind this search is not all about you. Jesus wants you to participate in his mission through the church. Where are your gifts most needed? Don't merely look for what's comfortable. Jesus cares more about who you are becoming than your comfort. We often want comfort, Jesus wants us to be like him.

11. Does the church want to see people meet Jesus?

Does the church view itself as an outpost for the gospel? Is this a church committed to reaching non-Christians with the gospel? Is the church primarily focused on its programs or primarily focused on seeing the gospel form a new people on Jesus' mission?

12. Is this a church that is willing to kick me out?

This probably isn't a question you'd naturally ask - but you should. Is this a church that cares enough about Jesus; name in this city that is willing to kick me out, should I remain unrepentant and hard-hearted? Is this a church that cares enough about my eternal well-being that it is willing to exercise discipline to alert me to the gravity of my sin and prevent the harming of others?

13. Is this a church that I am willing to join "as is" with enthusiasm?

Are you willing to join a church "as is" with all that is done with everything yet to be done? Are you willing to be part of the church even if it doesn't perfectly suit your life-stage, family "needs" or stylistic preferences? Are you willing to be a bigger part of creating a future culture, rather than critiquing the present one?

14. Are you willing to make a decision and commit?

At some point, you'll need to make a decision. Don't make the process drag on for months and months. Prayerfully find a church. Get connected. Serve as you've been served in Christ. Extend grace towards the church as Jesus has extended grace towards you. Give generously to the church as Jesus generously gave himself for you.

15. For Christians: Are you leaving your current church as well?

Are you transitioning well? Have you spoken with your pastor and asked for his counsel? Is your desire to leave because of sinful, personal conflict or disappointment? Have you done everything in your power to reconcile relationships? Are you assuming the best of your current church?

Whatever you end up deciding, pray for every church you visit. Encourage the pastor, as appropriate. Don't make this search an exercise in self-righteousness. Don't search for the elusive perfect church. Approach with what you can give, not what you desire to take. Should you transition from a different church, be careful not to be divisive or sow discontent. Thank God for all that He is doing in your city and ask Him to do even more for His glory and the good for others.