

What Does *God* Look For In A Church?

- ❑ Entertainment?
- ❑ Contemporary Music?
- ❑ Excitement for all ages?
- ❑ A “feel good” message?
- ❑ Self help programs?

What *does* God look for in a church?

Does that strike you as an unusual question? It probably does because we are accustomed to thinking about what *we* want in a church. Individual tastes vary, but most people use the same list when “shopping” for a church. They want children’s programs geared to every age group. An exciting teen ministry is a must. Services must be relevant and entertaining, but most of all, short.

Do you recognize the motivating factor behind this “shopping list”? It is designed to answer the ultimate question, What do *I* want?, or What pleases *me*? Wouldn’t it be better to begin with the question, What does *God* want?, or What pleases *him*? After all, it is *his* church. Our goal should be to look for the kind of church that God looks for and to strive to be pleased with the kind of church that pleases him.

What does God look for in a church? ***God looks for:***

The Clear, Accurate Teaching of the Bible

The teaching of the Bible is the first priority of a church. In the New Testament, the early Christians “continually devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching.”¹ Pastors were commanded to be devoted to “the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”² People want church to be relevant, but it will only be relevant if the heart of the ministry is the exposition (explanation and application) of the Bible. You see, the timeless message of the Bible can change lives and meet every genuine need.³ *So, look for a church that is serious about Christian education and keeps the teaching of the Bible as the centerpiece of every service.*

A God-Centered Focus in Worship

Someone once wrote that worship is the “missing jewel” in the church. It is missing because we have become less concerned with God’s pleasure than our own. People determine the value of a worship service by how it makes them feel. Consequently, churches often structure worship for entertainment value. True worship, however, is God-centered rather than man-centered. As we leave a worship service, our first question should not be, *Was I* pleased? It should be, *Was God* pleased? Worship that pleases God begins with the communication of truth about his greatness and his goodness as revealed in the Bible. This understanding of truth about God elicits adoration and obedience in the heart of the worshiper. *Look for a church that is not designed to entertain you but is intent on making God known and pleasing him in every way.*

An Authentic Sense of Community

One of the most informative and exciting expressions in the New Testament is the phrase, “one another.” It is repeatedly used to describe the early churches. Christians in those churches loved one another, encouraged one another, counseled one another, prayed for one another, showed hospitality to one another, held one another accountable, etc. How different that is from what we see in churches today. They often resemble spectator events more than real communities where people live and work together. *Look for a church where the members show their love for one another through their involvement in each other’s lives.*

Ministry Shared by Each Member

¹ Acts 2:42. All Scripture quotations from the New International Version.

² 1 Timothy 4:13.

³ 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

A healthy church is one that seeks to “prepare God’s people for works of service.”⁴ God did not intend for the ministry to be carried out exclusively by an elite group of professional ministers. In God’s plan, every member is a minister, sharing some aspect of the work. Not everyone can teach or oversee the work of the church, but God has prepared every believer to make a significant contribution to the work of the church.⁵ Look for a church that not only encourages its members to get involved in the work of the ministry, but also expects them to do so.

A Passion to Share the Good News of Christ

Jesus Christ is God. He became a man in order to show the human race what God is like. He walked this earth perfectly, never committing any sin. Then he died a death that he did not deserve. He died as our substitute, paying the penalty for our sin. Three days later he rose from the dead to prove all that he claimed about who he is and what he came to do. He now offers men and women the free, lifechanging gift of forgiveness of sin. The mission of the church is take this good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world.⁶ He is wonderful beyond description and his gift is beyond value and so, he deserve the praise and worship of all people. Therefore, the life mission of every Christian is to share this marvelous message. *Look for a church that eagerly proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ.*

Ministry Structure Shaped by Truth

Tradition is a valuable part of church life, so long as it reflects the truth of the Bible. It gives us a sense of history and a connection with those who have followed Christ in the past. Unfortunately, some churches hold to traditions that do not perpetuate truth. Many of these are “new” traditions, being of recent origin. People expect church government to run like American democracy or they confuse certain programs with biblical patterns of ministry. Instead, a church must have a philosophy of ministry that truly reflects the ministry structure taught in the New Testament. *Look for a church that can articulate its philosophy and show how everything they do is designed to be consistent with that philosophy.*

If you are looking for a church, please remember that the church belongs to God. It is “God’s household-the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”⁷ We have examined six import characteristics that God looks for in his church. These aspects of church life are not optional, they are essential because *his* church must promote *his* purposes and exalt *his* glory.

God is passionate about his own glory because he is the one and only being in the all the universe that is truly worthy of our praise.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
throughout all generations,
for ever and ever!
Amen.⁸



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⁴ Ephesians 4:11-12.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.

⁶ Acts 1:8.

⁷ 1 Timothy 3:15

⁸ Ephesians 3:21.