

What Are People Looking For In A Church?

by Bill Crews

At this very moment hundreds of thousands of our fellow-Americans are looking for a church (or, as some express it, “a church home”). They are looking (1) because they have recently moved to a new area, (2) because they had drifted and are now ready for a renewal of religious interest in their lives, or (3) because they have become unhappy with “their old church.” What are they looking for? What do they hope to find? What do they feel they need?

The Answers

1. Some are looking for a church that is like the former church they were affiliated with, most for no other reason than tradition or custom. They don't want any change from the religion they have become accustomed to.
2. Some are looking for a church (building) that is convenient to where they live, one that is within easy driving distance. They don't want to have to drive very far to get to “the services.”
3. Some are looking for a church made up of friendly people who will make them feel welcome and wanted. They don't want one whose members seem cold and formal.
4. Some are looking for a church that will give them a sense of belonging and of importance. They don't want a church whose members just never seem to accept them, who do not give them a sense of self esteem.
5. Some are looking for a big church because they prefer to just blend in with the crowd. They don't want a church that is so small that they can be missed at services and that they have to take some active role.
6. Some are looking for a small church because they want to be able to know all the members and because “smaller churches are usually friendlier and more like a family.” They don't want a church that is so big that “you can't tell the members from the visitors.”
7. Some are looking for a church that is engaged in doing a lot of “good works.” They don't want a church that isn't into solving “world problems” and committed to “social reform” and “community improvement.”
8. Some are looking for a church that sponsors a lot of youth activities and family affairs. They aren't interested in a church that doesn't have parties, picnics, dinners, suppers, games, teams, clubs, scout troops, exercise and health programs, classes for hobbies and crafts, etc.

What's Missing In These Answers?

Now, if you will, look back over that list. There is in it not a word about God, or Christ, or the Bible, or the gospel of Christ, or salvation from sin, or soul, or heaven, or eternal life. People need to open their Bibles, and read the New Testament, and find out why Jesus built His church (Matt. 16:18), and find out what a congregation of God's people is supposed to be, and to teach, and to do. Churches existed in the New Testament for the purpose of ministering to the spiritual needs of men, for the purpose of glorifying God, for the purpose of teaching God's word, for the purpose of saving the lost and edifying the saved (Eph. 3:20-21; 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 3:15). When a group of Christians constitutes a church, they do not have to wonder what God wants them to do. The lives they are to live individually, the organizational arrangement they are to have, the doctrine they are to teach, the collective worship they are to engage in, the collective work they are to do are all clearly defined in the New Testament. Some Suggestions

Permit me to offer some suggestions:

1. Look for a church that respects the sovereignty of God and the authority of Jesus, the Son of God, Rom. 1:20; Matt. 28:20.
2. Look for a church that respects the Bible as the inspired word of God and the gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 1:16.
3. Look for a church that strives to be like the churches you can read about in the New Testament -- in designation, in worship, in organization, in teaching, in work, Acts 2:42; Col. 3:17; 2 John 9.
4. Look for a church that is concerned about lost souls and eternal destinies, Acts 8:4; I Thess. 1:8.
5. Look for a church that ministers to the spiritual needs of men, that is more concerned about giving men what they need than about giving men what they want, Eph. 4:12; Acts 20:20, 27.

Please consider us, and please accept this as an invitation to visit our assemblies and Bible classes and check us out.

ADDENDUM: I have known people to select a congregation on the basis of where their children wanted to go (yet, the children were not even allowed to select the family food menu), on the basis of the services offered their children, on the basis of the preference of a mate not even a Christian, on the basis of the number of friends and social contacts available. Why not at least examine the Scriptures, investigate the church carefully, and pray unto God fervently about such an important matter. The church of which you become a member and to which you contribute is a church which you endorse.

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