

For many new believers or even those seeking to worship God rightly one of the biggest challenges is identifying the true church that leads them to worship God in spirit and truth.

This challenge arises largely because of the proliferation of false doctrines and leaders with misguided or even malicious intentions, whose goal is to mislead rather than save souls.

Therefore, as a Christian, you must be a discerning seeker. God calls us to such discernment, as warned in 1 Timothy 4:1 (ESV):

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.”

Indeed, we live in times of widespread deception.

Despite the abundance of false churches and teachings, the solution is not to isolate yourself at home. Scripture commands us not to neglect gathering together (Hebrews 10:25 ESV):

“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.”

The benefits of fellowship far outweigh solitary worship. Just as a small stone in your food won't make you discard the whole meal, encountering some false teaching in a church shouldn't lead you to abandon all fellowship, but it does call for careful evaluation.

Joining a church, however, is not an automatic ticket to heaven. Yet, the right church plays a crucial role in helping you persevere in faith and grow spiritually on your journey to eternal life.

Consider this analogy: a church is like a school. When a student finishes primary school and moves to secondary school, many schools compete for his or her enrollment, each promising good results and a conducive learning environment.

It is the student's responsibility to investigate and discern whether the school truly meets the standards needed for success. A poor choice can place the student at great risk of failure,

regardless of their intelligence.

Even if the school is excellent, the student's own effort is necessary for success. Both the school's quality and the student's diligence work together.

Imagine a student saying, "I won't go to school; I will just study for my final exams at home." Would that student likely succeed? The purpose of the school is to provide teachers, discipline, and a structured environment conducive to learning.

Similarly, Christianity and the church must go hand in hand. It is your responsibility to choose a church that will support and nurture your spiritual growth.

Key Criteria to Identify the True Church

1) Jesus Christ Must Be the Center of Faith

Christianity is about Jesus Christ. A church that does not place Christ alone as the foundation of faith is not genuine. Beware of churches where a prophet, a leader, or even saints are exalted above or alongside Christ as mediators of sin forgiveness (cf.

Colossians 2:18-19 ESV):

“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head...”

If you find Jesus compared to others as though they share His unique role, flee immediately.

2) The Church Believes in the Holy Bible Alone

A true church accepts the canonical 66 books of the Bible no more, no less. Some denominations add the Apocrypha or elevate church traditions to the level of Scripture, which is a deviation (cf. Revelation 22:18 ESV):

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.”

If a church elevates tradition above Scripture, it is a place of deception.

3) The Church Preaches the Kingdom of Heaven

John the Baptist began his ministry proclaiming, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 3:2 ESV). Jesus and the apostles continued this message (Matthew 4:17, Acts 28:31). True Christianity is the good news about the coming heavenly kingdom, not primarily the kingdom of this world. If the church’s message is mostly about earthly wealth, power, or status, it’s a warning sign.

4) The Church Emphasizes Holiness and Love

Sanctification and love are foundational marks of a living church (Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 4:7-8 ESV):

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God...”

If people come to church dressed inappropriately, uncorrected in sin, or without being called to repentance and transformation, the church is not faithful.

5) The Church Affirms the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit manifests His presence through gifts such as healing, prophecy, tongues, and more (1 Corinthians 12:7-11 ESV):

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... to another healing, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy...”

If a church rejects or suppresses these gifts entirely, it restricts the Spirit’s work and is not truly the body of Christ.

Final Words:

Take this matter seriously and evaluate your church against these biblical standards. Many believers remain trapped in false denominations out of fear or ignorance, but ultimately, you alone are accountable for your faith (Romans 14:12).

I pray God grants you wisdom and discernment as you seek the true church.

May the Lord bless you.

Share on:
WhatsApp

Print this post