

Faithful Church?

QUICK TIPS

WEBSITE SAYS...

A review of the churches website may give you quick insight into what the church believes or doesn't believe, but you may need to call or email them.

Look for information related to:

- Elder Qualifications
- Women in Elder/ Pastoral Roles
- The Holy Spirit

6 Key Identifiers to help you find a Biblically Faithful Church

It can be challenging to find a **Biblically Faithful Church** (Revelations 2:10, 3:8) today due to the focus some churches and church attendees place on entertaining speakers, music, and programs. When a church is focused on these items instead of a faithfulness to adhere biblically to what God says His church should be, it is an indicator of that church not being Biblically Faithful. But how can you determine this quickly to help avoid the heartache of an unhealthy church? The 6 Key Identifiers below are not intended to be an exhaustive list of what to look for in a church but are provided to help you quickly understand if the church you are thinking of attending is a **Biblically Faithful Church**.

BE ENCOURAGED! Finding a **Biblically Faithful Church** is worth the work you will put in!

1 – Clearly Believes the Bible is True Without Original Error (2 Peter 20-21, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Proverbs 30:5-6)

- Qualified Elders for the Church (Timothy 1:1-9)
 - The church should clearly mention elders. Ask the church or review their website to understand how these men qualify for their roles of service.
- Women in Elder/Pastoral Roles (1 Timothy 2:8-15, 1 Peter 3:1-7)
 - If the church has female pastors or elders, the church is biblically inconsistent. At the same time, make sure they see Godly women as wise, intelligent, influential, modest examples, well-respected, and equally created in the image of God in a complimentary design with men.
- Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)
 - The bible suggests that the time for the use of Holy Spirit given miraculous sign gifts through the apostles has passed. If the church believes in “modern day”: apostles, prophets, speaking in tongues, healing as a sign gift, full gospel, full use of the gifts in practice today, there is an implication of the church being less than ideal.

2 – Clearly Preaches the Bible and the Gospel (2 Timothy 4:2, 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 9:16)

- Preaching the Bible and the Gospel leads to practicing: servant-hearted evangelism (1 Thessalonians 2:8, 1 Peter 3:15), water baptism by immersion that does not act as salvation (Matthew 28:19-20), Communion that does not act as salvation (Matthew 26:26-30, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34) and Prayer (Matthew 6:7-13, 1 Thessalonians. 5:17).
- Healthy sermons have a Christ-centered message focused in a set of verses in the Bible, including reading, explaining, proclaiming, and applying the Bible. The preacher should spend the majority of the time speaking directly from the Bible instead of discussing his or other's opinions, quoting others/books, or telling stories/analogies/illustrations.
- The Gospel is the life altering message of a perfect Holy God creating people to live in relationship with Him. People rebel against God in sin to separate themselves from God and need Jesus Christ's perfect life, sacrificial death, resurrection from the dead to lovingly redeem us from our sinful separation from God. People who want to be saved from God's just wrath against their sinful life confess their need for salvation through Jesus Christ's offering and therefore live a life for God and not for self or the world (Isaiah 6:3, Genesis 1:26-28, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 10:9-10, Acts 20:21)

3 – Clearly Sings Biblical and Gospel Focused Songs (John 4:24)

Singing should be focused on the biblical Truth of who God is through the Gospel. Worship leaders should be modest, character qualified, servants who serve to help the church sing together to God. Singing and music overtly focused on performance, production, emotionalism, presentation, and style of worship is not biblically derived.

4 – Intentionally Qualifies the Character of Pastors/Elders (Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Philippians 2:1-7)

Pastors/elders are to be observably qualified examples in humility, hospitality, gentleness, marriage, purity, self-control, prudence, parenting, not loving money, and living in a way that does not invite criticism. Qualified Deacons are also normally a part of a healthy church to help serve the body (1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-7).

5 – Makes Pastors Available to Disciple and Equip the Flock (1 Peter 5:1-4, John 10:14)

Pastors should have a basic mutual relationship with the body amongst them (including the lead/senior/teaching/preaching pastor). If someone is a member at the church, they would not be strangers (unknown) to their pastor who preaches regularly, in a healthy church. Pastors are to serve, shepherd, and equip the church (John 10:12-13, Matthew 10:8b, 1 Timothy 6:5, 2 Corinthians 2:17, Ephesians 4:10-11).

Pastors having Relationships with the people is necessary to help pastors:

- **Be a trustworthy example.** Lead the sheep by a observed example (Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 5:3, Titus 1:5-9).
- **Protect the flock.** Pastors/Elders are courageous to lovingly correct false teaching. (John 10:11-13, Acts 20:28, Titus 1:9)
- **Disciple the flock.** Shepherd the flock by helping people grow in feeding themselves in truth, dealing with their areas of immaturity, brokenness, and sin (Matthew 28:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Colossians 1:28-29, Matthew 18:15-20, Romans 12:1-2).
- **Disciple Parents to shepherd their Children:** Children are primarily to be discipled by their parents, when Christian parents are present (Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:1-11, Psalm 127:3-4) and the church comes alongside the parents and kids (sometimes in great measure), but does not create programs for parents to avoid parental responsibility.
- **Avoid** businesses-like revenue focus, program/event driven, social media/marketing/self-promo (John 2:13-17, 13:14-15).

6 – Understands the Responsibility of Faithful Church Members (Philippians 1:3-4, 1 Corinthians 12:14-24)

- **Giving & Serving.** They give internally (1 Timothy 5:17-18) and support funds going out externally through the church to outside Gospel works (2 Corinthians 9). They lovingly serve each other internally as a church in a prioritized way of living (John 13:14-15, 1 Peter 4:10) to better evangelistically serve externally as they have opportunity (Galatians 6:9-10, 1 Thessalonians 2:8).
- **Affirm the observed character, teaching, and decisions of elders** (Hebrews 13:7, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 17:11, Matthew 18:15-20).
- **Entrust themselves to the loving care, gentle correction, and kind biblical servant leadership of their elders** (Hebrews 13:17, Matthew 18:15-20), while not blindly idolizing leaders (1 Corinthians 3:1-9), but encouraging them as brothers by supportive prayer.

Does the church periodically **serve “the Least”** of our brothers and sisters in Christ? (Matthew 25:41-46)

Does the church **help the family of God who are in need** of justice & protection, particularly the defenseless, fatherless, or widows in the body? (Isaiah 1:17, Galatians 6:9-10)

What does the church believe about the **sanctity of life**? (Psalm 139:13-16, Exodus 21:22-25)

What does the church believe about **Creation**? (Genesis 1-9)

- Most churches do not have a “creation statement” but it’s a good question to ask the pastor/elders before visiting. Ask if they affirm a literal 24hr/6day creation as stated in Genesis. They should believe in a literal Adam (God created life), “the Fall” (the point at which real death entered the world), and a literal Noah (God chose to judge the world by sending in a worldwide flood).

What does the church believe about these other aspects of life & Christianity?

- **The Value of Work** (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12)
- **Preaching Politics vs. Preaching the Word** (2 Timothy 4:2)
- **The Church & Israel** (Romans chapters 9-11)
- **Partiality and Racism vs. Loving all people** (Acts 10:34-35, Colossians 3:11, James 2:1-13)

Does the church **over-emphasize their convictions** regarding:

- Education of children through public school, private school, or homeschool
- Following popular leaders, authors, pastors, or movements over the Scriptures as the authority

What does the church believe about **gender** (male and female) and **marriage** (one-man and one-woman) as defined by scripture? (Genesis 1:16-17, Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31)

**OTHER
HELPFUL
AREAS TO
CONSIDER**

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS...

Not Yet a Christian? You now have a basic starting point to find a faithful church to help you learn about God’s love and truth.

Unchurched/Non-Church Member Christians: Thank God for His love, the ways you may have been faithful to the church in the past, and ask a faithful church to shepherd you through their beliefs or your former church wounds.

Church Members/Partner Christians: Prayerfully thank God for ways that you have been faithful to God and His church, then consider how to be more faithful in church, confess areas you have been unfaithful. In humility meet with your leaders to learn their biblical explanation of a faithful Church. Take time to biblically and humbly consider their thoughts. Communicate humility, unity, or differences which may invite more dialogue or a prayerful patient future transition to a healthy church.

Pastors/Elders/Church Leaders: Do you need to make adjustments, learn more, or apologize to the church? Perhaps you started out faithfully but have turned to popular methods for “success”, instead of surrendering to Gods Word for direction. A path toward greater faithfulness may include confession and then repentance (which might invite patiently assessing elder qualifications and making leadership changes). Where are you and the church biblically doing well? Where are you and the church lacking? Consider taking weeks or months to study scripture, then reading a good book in these areas with your elders/leaders. Consider taking 6 months to 1 year to better model and teach on these areas biblically. If you have been faithful, can you help another church family?

Also, if a church is numerically or structurally unable to maintain biblical adherence toward being a faithful church, consider:

1. Strengthening faithful local church/churches with an infusion of some or all of your people.
2. Starting a new fully functioning faithful church with a qualified group of elders.
3. Becoming an evangelistic or outreach ministry that continuously funnels people into local faithful churches.

Hopefully these 6 Key Identifiers will help you find a **Biblically Faithful Church**, and we will see more **Biblically Faithful Churches** being used by God to transform people’s lives to be more like who He wants them to be because of Christ, instead of surrendering to letting people’s untransformed lives change the church. (2 Timothy 4:3-5, Romans 12:2)