

*Parenting Tools:*

## **Finding A Church After High School**



**HOME**  
*22.6*

### **Parenting Tools:**

*How do I help my son/daughter find a church after high school?*

Listen close. Do you hear it? You know that humming of the air conditioner, the ambient buzzing noise of the TV. That is the sound of less noise or maybe even silence around the house now that your child is off to college. That's right, your child really is gone. Sadly, during the college years, many of our teenagers not only leave the home where they grew up, but also the church. How do you help your child find a church after high school?

Encourage your child to look for the following things in a church body:

#### **Look for a church that speaks Truth instead of "tickles ears"**

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."— 2 Timothy 4:3

When helping your now adult child look for a church, encourage him or her to keep the main thing the main thing. Help your child see that if the truth of God's Word is not being preached or taught, then it is very likely that God's inerrant, infallible Word is not central to the DNA of that church. All the bells and whistles might be nice, but bells and whistles without the truth are meaningless. Yes, your child may hear what he or she wants to hear—or "have his or her ears tickled"—but the truth is what we all need to hear and adhere to. Be sure that your child is looking for a church where the entirety

of God's truth is honored, revered, taught, and preached, not a church that only preaches messages that are pleasant or easy to listen to.

### **Look for a church that promotes community instead of comfort**

Admit it. Unless you stayed at home during college or owned your own place, college life was not very comfortable. Dorm room beds are nothing compared to your own bed back home. Though your child may have once yelled and moaned about having to wait for an open shower at home, this is nothing compared to competing for one shower with suitemates. In the midst of a likely less-than-comfortable living environment, your child is going to gravitate toward things that remind or connect him or her to the comforts of home. In the same way that it is natural for us to seek the comforts of home when we go off to college, it can be natural for us to seek comfort in the church we attend. The longing to find comfort in a church is not necessarily a bad thing (the feeling of comfort often comes from finding our place and using our gifts in community), but comfort can become an idol and stunt our ability to grow and serve, if we seek it exclusively.

Help your child see that when searching for a church, it is important to seek community more than comfort. There are many churches out there that have similarities to your child's home church, but lack in community. Encourage your child to join the likes of Daniel (Daniel 6), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3), David (1 Samuel), and Jesus (the Gospels), who willingly sacrificed their own comfort for community with God and other believers.

### **Look for a church that is Kingdom-focused instead of inward-focused**

Thom Rainer writes,

"Any healthy church must have some level of inward focus. Those in the church should be disciplined. Hurting members need genuine

concern and ministry. Healthy fellowship among the members is a good sign for a congregation. But churches can lose their outward focus and become preoccupied with the perceived needs and desires of the members. The dollars spent and the time expended can quickly become focused on the demands of those inside the congregation. When that takes place, the church has become inwardly obsessed."

The church is not Kingdom-focused. When helping your child look for a church during college, research the church's local and global missions focus. Does the church simply fund mission endeavors or does it participate itself? How often does it serve the local community? Why does it serve the community? Do the members of the church often share "God stories" of their own encounters with the lost or unchurched?

Now that you have some things to look for, consider these first steps to helping your child find a church.

#### **1. Make it a priority**

Just as a college meal plan or Ramen noodles are essential for keeping your child fed in college, likewise, finding a church is essential to your child becoming more and more like Jesus. Finding a local church should be as important as your child doing anything else in college.

#### **2. Make a plan**

Finding a church will not come naturally to most. The college years can be some of the worldliest years of your child's life. Unless your child is planning to attend church on a given Sunday and has set an alarm clock with multiple backups, the likelihood of your child finding a church or even attending a church is slim-to-none. Help your child make a plan to go visit churches. Make a plan to talk to your child about those visits.

### **3. Plug in**

Work hard to help your children find their place in the church and fill the void. Encourage your child to be an active participant, not a mere member.

### **4. Remember no church is perfect, but there is a perfect church for your child**

If your child seeks to find perfection in a church, be ready for major disappointment. However, there is a perfect church for your child. The perfect church is one where your child is challenged, expected to grow, given opportunity to serve, and equipped to make disciples.

### **5. Go all in!**

Dorothy got it right in the Wizard of Oz...there is no place like home. Many college students loosely commit to a local church because they want to stay connected to the church they grew up in, mostly for the sake of nostalgia. Encourage your children to go all in with the local church that God is calling them to be a part of. That new church may not be like their home church, but they can make a new home of the church that God has placed them in locally.