

## **What Are You Looking For?**

Many people are looking for a “new church home.” Perhaps they have recently moved to different community. Perhaps they feel a desire to make religion a part of their lives, either for the first time or a renewal of earlier interest. Having children sometimes prompts parents to seek spiritual training for their family. Often, people are looking for a new church because they are dissatisfied with their old one.

Whatever the motive, people are looking for a new church. But what kind of church? What are they looking for? What are you looking for?

- Some are looking for a *traditional* church, just like the one they left behind or the one they grew up in.
- Some are looking for an *innovative* church, one completely different from anything they have ever experienced.
- Some are looking for a *convenient* church, one which is located nearby that will minimize their travel time.
- Some are looking for a *friendly* church, one that will quickly welcome them and make them feel special.
- Some are looking for a *large* church, where they can get lost in the crowd.
- Some are looking for a *small* church, where they can get to know everyone well, or in some cases where they can be more prominent and exert more influence.
- Some are looking for an *exciting* church, one with emotionally stirring assemblies.
- Some are looking for an *entertaining* church, where the music is like a concert and the preacher is part comedian.
- Some are looking for a *tolerant* church, where no one will rebuke them if they (or a family member) live a sinful lifestyle.
- Some are looking for a *providing* church, one with all kinds of programs and services such as day care, schools, recreational outings, exercise classes, etc.
- Some are looking for an *elite* church, where they will be able to make a name for themselves or make some good business contacts by mixing with the upper class.

Something’s missing here, isn’t it? What we ought to be seeking is a *truthful* church, one that follows the New Testament pattern, upholds God’s revealed truth (1 Timothy 3:15), and keeps the emphasis where He put it: on man’s spiritual needs.

What we are looking for in a church says a lot about us. Honestly, are we trying to please God or ourselves?

**- by Frank Himmel**

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## **The Lord Spoke to Me**

At one time the word of God was found in human vessels, inspired men, the apostles and prophets of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:1; 4:6-7; Ephesians 3:1-5). The Holy Spirit revealed to them God's thoughts and God's words (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). The holy apostles and prophets worked mighty signs, wonders, and miracles to confirm the divine message they brought (Mark 16:17-20; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

But these same apostles and prophets wrote down these inspired - God-breathed - words in books (Ephesians 3:1-5). These books were gathered together in one, the New Testament, which, along with the Old Testament compose the Scriptures, the writings from God commonly called the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Peter 3:14-16). Now the word of God is found in an inspired book, the Bible, which is completely sufficient to supply all our spiritual needs (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

When someone claims, "God spoke to me," he is claiming the gift of prophecy. But that gift has ceased, and all divine truth for men has been revealed, confirmed, and recorded in the Scriptures. If you're having a hard time making a difficult decision, look for guidance from the Scriptures and pray for wisdom to do what's best (James 1:5). But don't confuse your opinions or feelings for divine revelation. Divine truth doesn't come from a human mind; it's found in an inspired book. Your feelings are just your feelings, and all they prove is that you feel that way.

This reminds me of a true story Robert F. Turner used to tell. A woman came to him asking him to perform her wedding ceremony. Upon discussion he found she was unscripturally divorced. He said he couldn't perform the ceremony. She left but later returned and announced, "Brother Turner, God spoke to me and said it's OK, you can perform my wedding ceremony." Unfazed, he inquired, "Well, did He write it down for you?" "No," she replied. "Well," Brother Turner announced, "God spoke to me too. But He wrote it down for me." And He read to her Matthew 19:9. If God didn't write it down for you, He didn't speak to you.

**- by Keith Sharp**

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## ***Torture & Death***

Recently in the news we have been informed about intelligence gathering activities by various agencies of our federal government. Some of these actions have included the use of torture techniques to obtain vital information from terrorists. Political pundits have been debating about the usefulness of such techniques and whether or not our country should use such measures. Many have questioned the advisability of revealing this information, especially to our enemies. The details of these torture methods are sickening to read. While the necessity and appropriateness of these procedures can be deliberated, surely all right thinking individuals wish for a world where such would never be needed.

If this news about torture is troubling to you then you ought to be really moved by a contemplation of the death of Jesus Christ. Think about it for a moment and consider the horrific events and physical torture that led to His death:

1 - He was beaten with a scourge by Roman soldiers. This beating would have left his back a mass of torn and bleeding flesh. One expert has speculated that the bones of His shoulder blades and possibly His rib cage could have been exposed by sharp bits of glass and metal that the Romans weaved into their whips. He almost certainly was left in a state of shock. We know, historically, that some victims died from such beatings.

2 - A crown of sharp thorns was beaten into His scalp by the soldiers as they mocked and humiliated Him.

3 - At Calvary He was nailed to the cross by his hands and feet. The pain of huge nails being driven through His flesh is more that we can even imagine.

4 - For six hours He struggled and suffered on the cross, fighting for every breath of air. Finally He died. As a final act of brutality, a soldier pierced His side with a spear.

Spend some time trying to picture in your mind the awful, bloody, torturous death that Jesus died. And then remember that it was because of your sins and mine.

**- by Greg Gwin**