

CHOOSING A CHURCH

*A description of various cults, church denominations/types,
and recommendations for choosing a church*

Glen C. Robertson

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THE AUTHOR HESITATES to compile this message, a recommendation of which church to attend, as it might easily be misconstrued as a criticism or condemnation of various denominations and ministries mentioned. To criticize what God is doing through another person or group of persons is a very serious sin, as glorifying God and ministering to others are very precious and sacred acts, and must be encouraged and facilitated by others when at all possible. Very creation was brought into being for the one purpose of glorifying God!

11 Thou Art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 4:11 The BIBLE

The worship and glorification of God is the ultimate act of man; there is absolutely nothing that is more important in a person's life or of a greater responsibility of obedience. For this reason, to criticize or stifle another person's worship or service to God is the ultimate act of sin. Everyone is called upon to glorify God, and, as everyone is different, everyone's acts of glorifying God will be different, and will closely reflect what is near and dear to the person glorifying Him. This is because worship and ministry are

nothing more, less, nor different, than giving God and others what is most precious to us, and reflecting God's glory, for His exaltation. For this reason, we cannot demand that worship and ministry follow only the patterns that we ourselves follow. It would be unthinkable to tear someone off the feet of Jesus because of the possibility that we ourselves care to keep our distance from Him when we worship Him! Worship of God, serving Him, and ministering to others are the ultimate, and most important things possible, and must be considered sacred and most welcome in all their forms; to deny others the privilege of giving to God their best, in the ways that most wholly and accurately express their unique love for Him, is therefore the ultimate sacrilege!¹ For this reason this author hesitates before writing this message!

38 And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name, and He followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.
39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My Name, that can lightly speak evil of Me.
40 For he that is not against us is on our part.
41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Mark 9:38-41 The BIBLE

What is a, "Denomination?"

CHRISTIANS ARE often asked, "What religion are you?" A religion is a belief system such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, etc., so the literal answer a Christian would give to this question would be, "I'm a Christian." However, if someone wishes to know what *kind of Christian* a person is, they would more accurately ask, "What denomination are you?" In other words, "What kind of church do you go to?"

A DENOMINATION IS SIMPLY THE NAME OF AN ORGANIZED GROUP OF CHURCHES WITH A SIMILAR EMPHASIS OR EMPHASES

And the denomination a Christian attends reflects that Christian's personal emphasis in his walk with God, or even his personality! His denomination might be more lively in their worship, or more conservative. It might emphasize the Bible, or emphasize prayer and worship. So knowing the name and type of the denomination that his church is a member of will usually tell you what his personal Spiritual emphasis is. All Christian denominations believe basically the same thing: that Jesus (the Son of God) created the world and came to die on the cross for our sins, and that we must be Born Again^{6,7} to please God; we cannot earn our own salvation. A denomination is merely what emphasis a particular Christian group has when they worship together. We all like to be with people who share our own likes, experiences, and personality so as long as they don't serve to build walls between Christians denominations are natural and good.

This message seeks to explain the unique emphases of some of these various Christian denominations.

¹Except, of course, for the 'Unforgiveable Sin,' the ascribing to satan the work of the Holy Spirit!

Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30) Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

The present author has, however, followed the Lord for more than 50 years, and ministered in or attended services in perhaps a dozen different denominations (kinds of Christian churches). In the author's training, study, and experience in ministry and in his personal walk with the Lord, he has been blessed to have gained a few insights and understandings as to what is most effective in drawing the individual Christian, and the Christian congregation, in general, closer to their Lord. And he does make recommendations to his own family, to friends and to those seeking the Lord as to which churches might best help them in their walk with the Lord. So, in this message, the author shall continue that practice. And he feels that, as long as he is not overly critical and condemnatory toward various ministries against which he "warns" his readers, the author shall be able to offer his readers Spiritually-led insights that should help them in their own walk with our Lord.

Man is naturally fleshly and unspiritual, and his nature is therefore inherently at odds with God. Consequently, rather than automatically gravitating to the Spiritually-mature centre-ground between the black-and-white written Word of God, on the one hand, and a personal, Spiritual relationship with God, on the other, he naturally gravitates toward either one or the other of two of these seemingly mutually exclusive extremes, according to which of the two most suits his personality and his natural inclinations. This author writes, in WORD AND SPIRIT MINISTRIES, OUR PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION II:

*"Typically, the various groups that assemble to worship, minister, fellowship, and simply to fulfill the Divine mandate of Heb. 10:25 take on the characteristics of one of two types. The one type typically concentrates on that, "mystical," Spiritual side of the Christian walk, and relatively forgets or neglects the Word of God: the walk is primarily subjective, with little of the "black-and-white" objectivity of the Word of God, or the resulting holiness of personal character. Holiness appears to them to be legalism. The other group concentrates on the Word of God, and holiness, and in comparison, almost forgets or neglects the supernatural, "mystical," element of the Christian walk, that which might be called their actual relationship with the Person of God behind the Word. In them, holiness actually does become legalism."*²

When the author isn't pastoring he's of course sitting in a congregation on Sundays. However, because of the above, he often finds himself Spiritually malnourished in one or the other of the two solitudes mentioned: when he has been attending a Pentecostal or Charismatic church for a while, the author tends to gain a hunger for the Word of God, and good, solid, Biblical teaching. So he begins to attend a Baptist-type church. After a while, however, he will begin to develop a thirst for more Spirit-led worship, and the exercise in the congregation, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the personal walk with God that they nourish, so he returns to the Pentecostal-type church. The challenge is in finding a church that balances well these two seeming 'opposites,' encouraging a correct and well-rounded maturity in the Christian that balances both of these two necessary sides of the Christian walk!

The author was born in Canada, and has lived here all his life, so his experience has been primarily with Canadian denominations (church groups). However, Canadian denominations, while fewer in number than the total found throughout the world, nevertheless represent a rather accurate cross-section of the various denominations found internationally, especially if one looks at the various *kinds* of denominations.

² www.Micaiah.com/covering-ii.htm

Having, for 50 years and more, attended or ministered in over a dozen diverse denominations, this author is quite able to worship God, and to enjoy a service, in a church of any Godly and Bible-believing denomination. What God expects of us after we are **Born Again**^{6,7} is to attend church,³ to worship Him,⁴ and to minister to others⁵ wherever we are. We can do this in any church, any denomination. A simple example of ministering to others, even in a church new to us, was given the author by his own mother years ago, who told him to greet everyone around him in church, even in a church that one is visiting for the first time. Because, when new to a church, one has no idea who else there might be new! A friendly greeting might be exactly what someone needs, and, if they are new to the faith, or to that church, perhaps it is one's own greeting that will encourage them and bring them back the next Sunday! Ministry is by no means confined to the clergy; it is the responsibility of each and every believer, and can be done in whatever church one finds one's self in!

We have already mentioned the greatest difference between the two main types of evangelical denominations: the black-and-white Bible BAPTISTS, and the subjective, mystical, PENTECOSTALS/CHARISMATICS. These two types of churches will be the main ones we will discuss; but first we will consider some others.

When a totally new group seeks to, "get back to," Biblical Christianity, perhaps following the teachings of a certain flamboyant individual, and their members have never even been **Born Again**,^{6,7} but they merely seek to get right with God some other way (usually by either, "correct understanding of the Scriptures," or by supposedly earning their salvation) such a group is known as a, "cult." They are completely outside of Christianity; their group has never taught being **Born Again**,^{6,7} and so never been part of Christianity. (Any cult or other nonChristian group may indeed have a few members who are **Born Again**,^{6,7} who came to Christ before or after becoming a part of this group, but, for the most part, individuals who join cults and world religions are not persons who are **Born Again**,^{6,7} their group does not teach nor experience being **Born Again**.^{6,7}) For this reason, the group is not a Christian denomination; it is not part of Christianity. It cannot be considered nor called a, "church," as it is not part of the greater, "Church," (with a capital, "C," meaning, the total number of Christians in the world, spoken of as a whole). It is merely a religious organization, a cult.

³ **Hebrews 10:25** Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

⁴ **Psalms 29:1-2** Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.
2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His Name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

⁵ **I Corinthians 12:7** Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

I Peter 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren,

Hebrews Ibid.

Hebrews 13:1-3 Let brotherly love continue.

2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

- CULTS -

CULTS OFTEN/USUALLY preach that their own little group is the only means of/way/path to salvation.

Cults can often be recognized by, among other things, the fact that they do not fellowship with Christian groups, nor even with each other; they recognize themselves to be something other than Christian, and are recognized that way, also by Christians.

Cults (nonChristian groups which have never been Christian) include such groups as:

- CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
(*i.e.* "MORMONS"), and various off-shoots
- WATCHTOWER SOCIETY ("JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES," "JWS")
- CHRISTADELPHIANS
- BAHÁ'Í
- HARI KRISHNA
- CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
- SCIENTOLOGY
- UNIFICATION CHURCH
- AUM SHINRIKYO
- Etc. (Not a complete list)

***Beware: A cult may use Christian terms in its name, or employ Christian terms and jargon in what they do, in order to appear Christian and legitimate.**

- HIGH CHURCH -

REFERRED TO AS, "the High Church," (by "the High Church") because of their traditionalism, pomp and ceremony, and older history, these are denominations or groups who have at one time been Christian. They will usually be more formal, have more traditions and pomp and ceremony, and clothe their clergy with robes.

Every denomination was formed to follow God as He instructed us, or with a desire to, "get back to," Biblical Christianity, the way the early church taught and followed God just after Jesus returned to heaven. To do this they generally initially discard the fancy pomp and ceremony of the church group they have just left, and attempt to follow God without all the unnecessary traditions and customs of their previous denomination. They return to following the instructions of Jesus and His Heavenly Father as

found in the Bible. After some decades or centuries, though, the group generally ends up following a religious system of their own making, with their own traditions and customs. This is often because that group has set aside the central teaching of Jesus, that which makes an individual or group Christian: that, to be right with God on earth and to enter heaven at death, one must be **'Born Again'**.^{6,7} The groups that have abandoned this experience and therefore its teaching are generally the oldest denominations within Christianity, and are often now Christian in name only. They rely, now, not on Jesus' self-sacrifice on the cross for their salvation, but on attempting to earn their salvation through good works, and on the religious trappings of pomp and ceremony, the very things their denomination was originally formed to escape. They may have some individual assemblies who do still (or once again) preach being **Born Again**^{6,7} (but generally this is unusual in their denomination). Their group, having lost the experience of personal relationship with Jesus Christ through being **Born Again**^{6,7}, will no longer be a Spiritual organization, but a social one, but with outwardly 'Spiritual' customs. And being a mere social organization, now, their agenda will no longer be the worship God, but a worship of man. Naturally, therefore, they and their group will now be primarily occupied with addressing social problems and injustices, preaching a humanistic, 'Social Gospel' and political activism, rather than Spirituality. These groups are usually seen as more respectable and politically correct, and are therefore more likely to be attended by politicians and less-than-enthusiastic 'followers of God.' And any directive of God in the Scriptures that interferes with what they wish to do, or with their own ideas of Christianity, will be ignored and even rebuked! These individuals and groups, therefore, often have a more 'figurative/non literal' interpretation of the Bible. They generally are more liberal/left-leaning. Israel is often not greatly favoured.

(And so other groups will have to be formed in their place, to take up the task of returning to the Bible and worship!)

Less concerned with the Spiritual than with the social, they often preach that there are many means of/ways/paths to salvation.

They often fellowship between themselves, and form religious and/or political associations with each other. High Church denominations are, to varying degrees, such organizations as:

⁶ **John 3:3-8** Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **Born Again**,^{6,7} he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit Is Spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be **Born Again**.^{6,7}

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

I Peter 1:23 Being **Born Again**,^{6,7} not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, Which liveth and abideth for ever.

- ROMAN CATHOLIC (even though the organization is now non-Christian there are some **Born Again**^{6,7} individuals within that organization). ROMAN CATHOLIC doctrine claims that salvation is impossible without membership in their group but their current leader/"Pope" claims that there are multiple ways to salvation: not just through ROMAN CATHOLICISM. And not just through Jesus!
- ANGLICAN/EPISCOPAL (many off-shoots have left, to return to the Bible)
- ORTHODOX (GREEK, EASTERN, RUSSIAN, etc.)
- UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA (METHODIST, UNITED METHODIST, Etc.)
- PRESBYTERIAN (there are many assemblies who do preach the whole Bible)
- LUTHERAN (some assemblies preach being **Born Again**^{6,7})
- Etc. (Not a complete list)

- LOW CHURCH -

REFERRED TO AS, "the Low Church," (by "the High Church") because of, among other things, their informality and lack of traditions and outward trappings. These denominations usually emphasize a literal interpretation of the Bible and a zealous pursuit of holiness. They are more evangelistic and missions-oriented, with a salvation-based missions goal. While they get involved in meeting the community's social needs, they emphasize an evangelistic mandate in their outreach. They are more generally conservative/right-leaning. They usually favour Israel, God's Chosen People.

They all preach that, as Jesus said, we must Born Again,^{6,7} that Jesus is the only means of/way/path to salvation;⁷ they do not preach universal salvation: they do not preach that everyone will be saved, nor that there are many different paths to God. Yet they all preach that, as Jesus says, salvation is offered freely to all who will make Jesus their Lord and Saviour;⁸ while Jesus commands His followers to join

⁷ **John 14:6-7** Jesus saith unto him, I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.

7 If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.

John 10:7-11 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I Am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I Am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I Am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

11 I Am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.

⁸ **John 10:14-16** I Am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and Am known of Mine.

15 As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.

regularly with other Christians for worship and mutual ministry salvation does not depend on membership nor on association with any particular organization.

Low Churches often fellowship among themselves and other Low Churches, and form religious and/or political associations with each other.

LOW CHURCH: BAPTIST-TYPE CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONS

BAPTIST-TYPE DENOMINATIONS are very Spiritually objective and Biblically-based. Teaching is a big part of their emphasis, as is correct doctrine. In worship/singing, they tend to sing more ABOUT God, than TO Him, using song to teach about Him. Being more objective and Biblically-based, they are characterized by far fewer new and unusual doctrines and weird denominations than are sometimes the Pentecostals/Charismatics. Members tend to be a little less outgoing and gregarious, being more reserved, conservative, and traditional in personal habits, clothing, and politics. They can be seen by some as rather stern and less flexible and accepting of differences in others in the congregation, or in newcomers. Sin is less likely to be accepted or ignored by these people. Services are more structured, Spiritually-mature, complete, and predictable, and tend to finish always at the same time. Pastors tend to be better educated, and the services tend to be shorter, than in Pentecostal/Charismatic-type churches.

BAPTIST-TYPE CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONS include:

- BAPTIST (FREE-WILL BAPTIST, SOUTHERN BAPTIST, etc.)
- EVANGELICAL FREE
- BRETHREN (PLYMOUTH BRETHREN, CLOSED BRETHREN, etc.)
- CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
- FREE METHODIST
- HOLINESS
- *SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST (They believe in worshipping on Saturday only, and are very legalistic/strict, vegetarian, etc., and are therefore on the fringes of Christianity. They usually do not fellowship much with other Christians.)
- Etc. (Not a complete list)

Acts 2:38-39 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name:
13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

LOW CHURCH: PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC-TYPE CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONS

PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC-TYPE DENOMINATIONS tend to be very subjective and based on a relational experience with God. The Holy Spirit Infilling/Baptism in the Holy Spirit, a second experience with God (an experience after salvation) is (or was) central to these groups. The most important result of this Second Experience is the Fruit of the Holy Spirit,⁹ which is therefore more in evidence in these people, and they therefore tend to be more gregarious and attractive in their personalities. They are not known for being stern. They can tend to be overly liberal and accepting of sin and compromise in their own lives and in the lives of others. The Bible is not emphasized as much in these churches as in Baptist-type churches, and therefore unusual and unBiblical doctrines, based on subjective experience and unlearned teachings can be more in evidence. Pastors often have no formal Spiritual nor ministerial training whatsoever. Relationship with God is emphasized, as are the gifts of the Holy Spirit,¹⁰ so, while there is less of a Biblically-mature Christianity in these groups, they are generally more mature in things of the Spiritual world, and in exercising the Gifts of the Spirit. This type of church is usually more subjective than objective in its understanding and teaching of Scripture, but preaches a rather literal understanding of the Bible compared to the teachings of the High Church. These churches, with perhaps a closer experiential walk with the Lord, tend to sing TO Him, rather than ABOUT Him. Services are usually less structured or Spiritually mature, and can last longer, sometimes very long.

PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC-TYPE CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONS include:

- PENTECOSTAL (FULL GOSPEL, ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF CANADA, PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS, etc.)
- CALVARY TEMPLE
- FOUR SQUARE GOSPEL
- CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY
- JESUS IS LORD CHURCH
- VINEYARD
- *WORD OF FAITH/VICTORY CHURCHES (Believe in various new and fringe doctrines at odds with much of Christianity as a whole)

⁹ **Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

¹⁰ **I Corinthians 12:8** For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

...

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

- *APOSTOLIC/UNITED PENTECOSTAL (Do not believe in the Trinity, and are therefore on the fringes of Christianity. Usually do not fellowship much with other Christians, and often will be very hesitant to identify as Apostolic, or, "Jesus Only," as they do not want to scare away other Christians or new adherents. Some of these groups, however, are losing the, "Jesus Only doctrine, and becoming more, "mainstream.")
- Etc. (Not a complete list)

LOW CHURCH: INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

AS THE AUTHOR sits and writes in 2017, there has been a tendency over the last few decades toward independent churches, and away from denominations. This is a good thing; the denominational models in which a pastor is sent by head office to pastor one of their churches, or in which the local church interviews various candidates, having them each preach a sermon for evaluation and possible hiring(!) could even be considered unBiblical (neither process is suggested in Scripture). They certainly carry with them the possibility of the pastor's preaching to, "itchy ears," or, in other words, preaching what will please his congregation or the denomination's head office, in order to keep his 'job!' The story of the fickle priest in Judges 17-18 comes readily to mind. We are warned against this tendency:

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

II Timothy 4:3-4 The BIBLE

(Indeed, regarding the danger of hiring one's self out to people wishing to hire a pastor, this present writer, himself, has been approached on various occasions by individuals who wanted to pay him to found and pastor a new church; those individuals would fund the church if this author preached he was told to preach!¹¹) A church should be based upon the ministry of its pastor, not the reverse (the beliefs of the denomination or congregation)! So it is recommended that one find a church that is Biblically based, and under a pastor who values Scripture and is willing to preach what God tells Him, not necessarily what pleases the congregation!

Denominations have recognized this tendency away from denominationalism and therefore often attempt to conceal their association with a larger group or denomination. For this reason, denominational churches have in great numbers been changing their very names! A, "Hilldale Pentecostal Church," for instance, might be renamed, "Transformational Assembly," or a, "Seaside Baptist Church," might end up with a new name such as, "Seaside Community Fellowship." Churches wishing to attract young people or the very informal will often give themselves names such as, "The Forge," or, "Adore." This tendency

¹¹ Like the wealthy old, heavily-accented German who wanted to hire the author to start and pastor a church based on his false doctrine that the Jews are in fact *not* God's chosen people (*despite the fact that they ARE*), or the divorcee, a major contributor to a church the author was pastoring, who withdrew her financial support when the pastor refused to remove from display a pamphlet he had written condemning unBiblical divorce and remarriage. www.Micaiah.com/divorce.htm, or the industrialist who wanted to hire the pastor to found and pastor an ecumenical church of universal belief. And other examples!

to non-descriptive names presents problems to a person new to town, or who is seeking a new church! Even more concerning: when asked what, “kind,” of church it is, or what it is similar to, a church representative will often be very reluctant to divulge this, fearing alienating or scaring off a potential new adherent! This writer encourages the interested party to in that case ask for a, “Statement of Faith,” a document which outlines the doctrines adhered to by the church. Such a Statement (albeit, far more detailed than what you might encounter at a church) can be found on this website at <http://www.Micaiah.com/ourcreed.htm>. (Do not confuse this with a document that states something like, “Hillside Community Fellowship exists to minister to our community and its families. We believe in reaching out to the community and to the world at large, through missions.” This is in fact what is called a, “Mission Statement,” and varies between most churches in only its exact wording; it is meant merely to set the mission/intent for the congregation, and will tell you absolutely nothing about what the church believes.) Ask for a Statement of Faith (similar to what, in the older churches, would be called a, “Creed.”) In the Statement of Faith (or document of similar title) look to see what that church says is the way to salvation; to be Biblical, following what Jesus preached, it must state that salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ, and reject any idea of earning one’s salvation or paying for one’s own sins. It should include the fact that God is One Person, but a Trinity, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit). If the Statement of Faith places more emphasis than mere passing mention on the Holy Spirit and speaks in more detail regarding His working in the Believer’s life, the church likely is Pentecostal/Charismatic-like, rather than Baptist-like.

God tells us in His Word that there is a second experience, an experience that takes place after salvation. Jesus told His disciples to wait for it:

49 And behold, I Am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But remain in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Luke 24:49 The BIBLE

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:5-8 The BIBLE

- And Jesus’ 11 remaining Disciples and His other followers were the first to experience it on the day of Pentecost, soon after Jesus returned to heaven.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:4 The BIBLE

Regardless of how long he has known the Lord, this power transforms the Christian! It makes his personality more like Christ (the Fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23) and gives him miraculous abilities (the Gifts of the Spirit – I Corinthians 12:4-11, 28) that help him grow as a Christian personally, and help

him minister to others. Jesus told His disciples to wait until they received it, before they started heading out to minister, and they transformed the early church from a group hiding away in an upper room, to a militantly evangelistic army that turned the world upside down. This transformational power is no less for the Church today, and is preached primarily by Pentecostal/Charismatic churches (both Denominational, and Independent) and experienced primarily by the people in them. For this reason, while the present author has spent years attending and ministering in various kinds of churches, both Low and High, Pentecostal/Charismatic and Baptist, it is this kind of church that he recommends most highly; this power is absolutely essential in fully empowering and maturing the Christian for both living a Godly life, and ministering to those around him! The, 'trick,' though, is to find such a church that is also very strong in the Word of God, so that the man of God may be fully-rounded, fully balanced in his walk with the Lord, and mature in all areas of the Christian walk!

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

II Timothy 3:14-17 The BIBLE

When seeking a new church, pray. Pray. And do your homework. Phone and talk to various churches that match your personality, and talk to your Christian friends. God will lead you to the church He wishes you to attend; it's even more important to Him, than it is to you! In the meantime, continue to attend where you are attending presently; there is no perfect church. Church is not for our entertainment; it is for worshipping God, ministering to others, and for gaining new and renewed insight into our Lord and His service. Church is what we put into it! The Christian's Spiritual maturity is seen also in his ability to attend, worship in, be blessed by, and bless, whatever Christian group he finds himself in! No matter which denomination or tradition we feel most comfortable in, all Christians are members of one single universal Church body of Christ, and that enables the mature in Christ to live and worship in harmony in CHRIST'S Church, no matter what assembly they attend on Sunday!

1 I (*Paul*) therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, Who Is above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ

Ephesians 4:1-7 The BIBLE