

# The twelve best questions to ask before going to a new church

*by Sam Rainer*

Let's assume the best. Someone is deciding on a new church for all the right reasons. Maybe it's you. Finding a new church can be both exciting and intimidating. Whether you're moving to a new area or starting a new season of life, it's wise to ask good questions before committing to a local congregation. The goal isn't to "shop" for a perfect church (because none exists), but to discern where you can worship, grow, and serve faithfully. These questions aren't about consumer preferences. They're about discovering a healthy, biblical church.

## 1. What does the church believe about the Bible?

A church's view of the Bible determines everything else. Ask if the church affirms the authority, inspiration, and sufficiency of God's Word. Leaders who trust Scripture will preach it faithfully and apply it consistently.

## 2. How does the church define and teach the gospel?

Listen for clarity about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone. A healthy church consistently points people back to the grace of God rather than human effort or tradition. Does the church emphasize repentance, faith, and discipleship—or just attendance and activity?

### 3. What theological convictions shape this church?

Every congregation has a doctrinal backbone. Find out about the core beliefs and where they allow freedom in secondary matters. Ask how theology shapes their ministries, not just what's printed in the statement of faith.

### 4. What is a typical worship service like?

Don't just make conclusions about what you see online. Visit in person. Pay attention to whether the worship is focused on glorifying God or entertaining an audience.

### 5. How can I connect beyond Sunday morning?

A church isn't just a weekly event; it's a family. Ask about small groups, classes, or service opportunities that help people build friendships and grow in faith together.

### 6. How does the church care for hurting people?

Healthy churches have a plan for pastoral care: visiting the sick, supporting the grieving, and walking with people through crisis. The way a church loves the broken reveals much about its heart.

### 7. What does church membership mean here?

Membership should involve more than attending or giving. It's a covenant relationship. Membership should carry mutual expectations: commitment, accountability, and

participation. A straightforward membership process signals organizational health and biblical seriousness.

## 8. Who leads the church, and how are decisions made?

Understanding the leadership structure and governance helps you see how the church maintains integrity. Ask about pastors, elders, and deacons, and how they're held accountable. Ask for a copy of the bylaws, and be cautious about any church that refuses to provide them. Also consider how the church maintains financial transparency with the congregation.

## 9. What is the church's mission?

A healthy church knows why it exists. Ask how the church reaches its community and supports global missions. Look for an evident passion to share the gospel. The healthiest churches inwardly are the ones most focused outwardly.

## 10. How does the church help me and my family grow spiritually?

From children's ministry to adult discipleship, ask how the church helps people at every stage of life know and follow Jesus. Healthy churches have intentional discipleship strategies for all ages.

## 11. How does the church approach safety and security?

Churches are designed to be welcoming places, but wise leaders also ensure they are safe places. Ask how the church protects children, manages emergencies, and screens

volunteers. A thoughtful safety plan demonstrates both stewardship and care for people. When a church takes safety seriously, it sends a clear message: We care about people enough to protect them.

## 12. What are the church's denominational connections or affiliations?

Every church is connected to something—either a denomination, a network, or an independent tradition—that shapes its doctrine and ministry. Ask about those relationships. Denominational ties often reveal accountability structures, theological distinctives, and mission partnerships that extend beyond the local congregation.

Remember, you're not asking, "Does this church meet my needs?" but rather, "Can I join the mission here and glorify Christ?" The right questions reveal whether a church's priorities align with God's Word and your calling to live it out. Don't rush the process. Pray, visit, and listen. The right church won't be perfect, but it will help you become more like Christ.