

# Church Shopping

Compiled by Paul R. Blake

## Introduction:

- A. We live in a religiously pluralistic society steeped in relativism
  - 1. We advocate freedom of religion and tolerate all religions
  - 2. Truth is relative and is affected by your background and beliefs
  - 3. This has led to an attitude that it does not really matter what you believe or where you worship, including the choice to believe nothing and attend nowhere
- B. This state of affairs generates questions:
  - 1. Does it really matter if we assemble with others for religious purposes?
  - 2. Are there any real differences between churches?
  - 3. Why can't we just go to the church of our choice?
  - 4. Isn't what I need from the church service more important than where I go to church services?

## I. IS ASSEMBLING NECESSARY?

- A. Disillusionment
  - 1. Weary of liturgical worship; uncomfortable with formality
  - 2. Hurt by hypocrisy and self-righteousness
  - 3. Infatuated with contemporary cultural influence on religion, fashion
  - 4. No longer attend worship or join with some community church or house church movement with no expectation of attendance
- B. Why do we assemble?
  - 1. We assemble because God commanded it - Heb. 10:25
  - 2. We assemble to encourage and be encouraged
    - a. Heb. 10:24; 1Cor. 14:12, 26
- C. Parallel concept: the Sabbath - Mark 2:23-28
  - 1. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath
  - 2. Man was not made for the assembly; the assembly is for man's good

## II. ARE ALL CHURCHES THE SAME?

- A. Most denominations, while having distinctive belief systems, have worked hard to "agree to disagree" and to not only tolerate one another but also accept one another in fellowship
  - 1. Must reduce or eliminate any emphasis on doctrine and choose a set of core beliefs common to all
- B. While many churches are similar, it is not true that all churches are the same
  - 1. Eph. 4:4 - there is one faith and one Body
  - 2. Col. 1:18 - the Body of Christ is the church
  - 3. 1Tim. 3:15 - the church is the pillar and support of the truth
  - 4. 2John 9-10 - the church is not to tolerate error or immorality
- C. The church that Christ recognizes
  - 1. It will be one and united
  - 2. It will accept and promote only the truth
  - 3. It will reject all error

- D. Do all churches meet this Biblical criteria? Then not all churches are alike
1. Matt. 7:21-23

### **III. CAN ONE ATTEND THE CHURCH OF HIS CHOICE?**

- A. Contemporary America has developed cafeteria Christianity
1. You can shop around for churches, looking for a church like you would look for a car, and try to find the best fit
  2. More often than not, the basis of that decision will be about how entertaining the worship may be, or how many youth services are offered, or how big it is, and less about its practice of what God has said
- B. Religion is not about what man wants but rather what God wants
1. John 4:20-24
  2. In the end, the true criteria ought to be whether we are going to the church of God's choice
  3. We should be seeking to associate with Christians who will help us in our walk with God
  4. We should be seeking to associate with Christians who love God's word as much as we profess to love it
  5. The focus is not on us, but on God

### **IV. WHAT DO I GET OUT OF IT?**

- A. More often than not, the question more often asked is, "what can the church do for me?"
1. 1Cor. 10:24; Rom. 15:1; Phil. 2:3-4
  2. A critical aspect of Christian development is the need to no longer have your own desires satisfied, but to work for the well-being of others
    - a. It takes maturity to grow into this attitude
    - b. Some never grow into it; others don't want to
    - c. They are the complainers that do little to help it get better
    - d. These are the ones who get upset and leave, acting as if the problem was with the congregation; in truth, the problem follows them because the problem is in them
  3. The question ought not be, "what can the church do for me" as much as, "what can I do for the church?"
  4. A servant will find happiness in the assembly
- B. If you assemble with others who do not hold to God's truth, or whose interests are not God's priorities, then you run the risk of losing your soul and becoming disillusioned with religion
1. If worship is more about you and less about God, you will soon err from the faith and lose interest in your salvation
  2. If you worship in a church of your choice rather than God's choice, you will not please Him and you will be lost
  3. You are not ordering in a restaurant; you are not choosing a program to watch on TV; you are not buying shoes; you are not putting together a fantasy religion team; you are honoring your Creator and Judge. PLEASE HIM, not yourself.