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## What Makes a Church a “Good Church”?

**Titus 2:11-12:** (NASB) *<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup>instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.*



Christians, like most other people, are creatures of habit. Although society has engineered dramatic changes in how we handle our lives, for many Christians the act of going to church remains a staple in their lives. We go to church to do what? Traditionally we have gone to learn about God, to have fellowship with those of like mind, to get away from the rat race of our lives and to remind ourselves about how to live in a Christlike fashion. Traditionally we have gone to church to reaffirm our faith - to strengthen ourselves to better stand for our core beliefs. Times have changed. Now it appears many of us go to church for different reasons. In many instances church has become a place of neighborly activity, social acceptance, goodness, activities, entertainment and fun. Church is now a nice place to go to “feel good about myself.” So, are these changes unhealthy or bad? What is wrong with feeling “good about myself”? What makes a church a really good church? [Matthew 16:18](#)

**The Apostle Paul, talking about when he was known as Saul:** [Galatians 1:13:](#) (KJV) *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted **the church <1577>** of God, and wasted it:* Clearly the church here means the called-out ones, people, the followers of Jesus. Knowing this changes the focus of our original question. So let’s change our theme question a bit: What makes a congregation of Christians a really good congregation? We often look for a church that is going to suit us based on our wants. Are we asking the wrong questions? Is what is wrong with your church the fact that your coffee is not gourmet?

A “Really Good Church” is God’s People - [arranged](#) in His way and for His glory.

Let’s go back to the early church as an example. Each sub-group within a congregation was given individual responsibility. [Titus 2:1-8:](#) Paul tells Titus he must speak sound gospel truth. Paul tells him the responsibilities of each sub-group. Think about what category you fit into and how you should be acting. Responsibility begins with those who are seasoned and therefore are to be respected: *Older men/older women* - those in attendance (not the teachers), leading the example. Paul started with the most seasoned members of the organization. They should be looked up to with respect. Responsibility from the seasoned is to be heeded by those who are mature and engaged in life: *Young women/young men* - mature but not yet seasoned. They should be looking up to the older generation as an example and have principles of behavior.

[Foundational Church Building Block:](#) The church is strong, healthy and vibrant when its members use any advantage or disadvantage they may possess or inherit to witness to the glory of God through a Christ like attitude of acceptance.

Those who attend church should not be thinking about their individual preferences, but rather the goodness of the whole environment and how they can participate. Does a “really good church” encourage all to claim all their rights? What about early church slaves? The texts in Titus show what should be a very natural give and take between generations and genders. It continues with circumstances that are not only unnatural, but downright horrible regarding slavery - how to handle slaves with the highest godliness and Christlikeness possible. Slavery was a common occurrence in society during the early church. How were they told to deal with this? Was everyone to stand up for their individual rights? [For more on the biblical perspective of slavery, please listen to our podcasts, “Is Slavery Acceptable to God?” from March 11, 2012 and “Did God Ever Sanction Slavery?” from October 10, 2010.](#)

A “Really Good Church” is God’s People - [standing](#) up together for Christ under the most difficult and limiting circumstances.

[Titus 2:9-13:](#) Wait! Christianity is all about liberty and being free in Christ. Why is the Apostle telling slaves to behave themselves, be subject to their master and not be argumentative? Shouldn’t they be told to stand up for their rights? The reason? *So that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.*



Today we work for employers. We are “enslaved” to serve them well. We should be a witness, let our light shine, be honest, have integrity, do our best job - and they will see that and appreciate it. Our employers should see there is something different about us. But bondslaves did not have the right to quit. They were slaves for life or until their contractual obligation was up. The Christian take on slavery at that time was, rather than fight for your human rights, we are here told to fight for the privilege of representing Jesus in whatever disadvantaged circumstance our life brings us. It is not about your human rights; it is about the right to honor and praise God in the disadvantage of your life. That attitude of rising to a high level of personal conduct is what makes a good church. God’s grace has brought salvation through Jesus. We have to deny ungodliness and worldly desires even if our rights are being infringed upon. Christianity is not about human rights, and that is a hard thing for a lot of Christians to understand. We need to rise above our human rights and be willing to put aside what might rightfully belong to us for the sake of following in Jesus’ footsteps. For a lot of us, when we go to church, it is about “me.”

**Foundational Church Building Block:** The church is strong, healthy and vibrant when its members use any advantage or disadvantage they may possess or inherit to witness to the glory of God through a Christ like attitude of acceptance.

**Where did the early church meet?** Romans 16:3-5: *Greet the church* (the congregation, the people) *that is in their house* - Meeting at the house of Priscilla and Aquila was a common, well-known circumstance. They opened their doors in hospitality for the sake of Christian growth. There is something to be said for meeting with those who are somewhat close by for the purpose of having someone to walk along side of through life instead of just seeing them on Sunday. Can you find a place close enough where you can really be a part of other Christians’ lives? Fellowship is valuable in building a bond together. Ephesians 5:11-21: To be a really good church we must encourage all to stay away from sin by being willing to call out what sin is and what it looks like. In a lot of congregations, because we want to be accepting, we are not willing to do that.

A “Really Good Church” is God’s People - providing shelter from the cold and dark - the cold and dark of the sinful world.

Not only do we call out the darkness but we rise above it and choose what will influence our lives. This is speaking to the average “called out” follower of Jesus. The advice is to be careful how you walk. Make the most of your time. To make a church a good church, you have to be a good example. You do not just go to hear and be inspired, but you must be inspiring to others. Make sure your influences are spiritually-based and not desire-based. *Singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord* - Have praise, joy and enthusiasm. Hebrews 10:25: Now more than ever we need to assemble with those of like precious faith to encourage, build up and develop more Christlikeness.

**Foundational Church Building Block:** The church is strong, healthy and vibrant when its members stand together in God’s spirit and truth, call out darkness, inspiring one another and living thankfully.

Dealing with external issues of our stations in life and the fighting off and calling out of sin are good church actions. Handling issues from within - not getting along as well as we ought, saying or doing things that may be hurtful to our brothers - that is where a good church, a good congregation, must rise up to what it should be...a spiritual environment that is clear, clean and Christ-focused always and under all circumstances. That is hard to do, but most people, when looking for “a good church to go to” are not thinking along those lines. They instead ask, “Am I going to like the music?” “Are the seats comfortable?” “Are the services too long?” That is not what true Christianity is asking us to look at. The idea of “church” is the congregation getting together to become more Christlike. Even though feeling good is a result, its main purpose is to help people understand spiritual things.

A “Really Good Church” is God’s People - supplying joy for your journey and uplift for your heart even when things are not as smooth between us as we would want them to be.

**Joy in our journey begins with “putting on” the right gear:** Colossians 3:12-16: *Put on* - here we are given the analogy of getting dressed, implying we are not naturally equipped with these things. We have to intentionally put them on.



What makes a good church? Are the individual members of the congregation wearing the right “Christian uniform”? Once we are properly clothed we can more easily let spirituality work within us to initiate true joy! One of the end results, the outgrowth, of being part of the church is joy. It is a joyful experience not only to be with others but to live in joy. That comes from spiritual growth, development and contentment. We can feel joyful on Sunday and be miserable the rest of the week. But if we put on what the Scriptures tells us, we can be joyful in our lives. <sup>15</sup>*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.* This has to be done in the right order. <sup>16</sup>*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Music can be misrepresented in the church. *Admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* - not just for the emotion but for growth. Hymns are prayers set to music. Letting Christ’s peace rule is a key to joy flowing in us and through us to others. Letting Jesus’ words rule is the filter through which all that joy can flow. Do the songs or hymns bring praise, honor and glory to God? There is a sacredness of our gathering, and we need to rise up to that sacredness rather than bring it down to our personal taste in music.

**Foundational Church Building Block:** The church is strong, healthy and vibrant when its members put on a Christlike heart and let him rule over all of their thoughts, feelings and mutual interactions.

**More early church meeting history:** Romans 16:23: Here is a principle of members of the congregation putting themselves out for the comfort of other members so they can come together to worship, study and pray together in an atmosphere that enhances spirituality.

A “Really Good Church” is God’s People - organized in a way that is spiritually strong and acceptable before God.

Choosing leadership begins with personal integrity and character. **The Scriptures talk to us about choosing leadership:** 1 Timothy 3:1-4,6-10: These are high-level qualifications we are to look for with someone in that position. This is very serious. Acts 14:23

**Foundational Church Building Block:** The church is strong, healthy and vibrant when its members choose those who would lead them based upon truth, clear spiritual and character qualifications and not based on their emotions and personal biases.

What about times when brothers or sisters are going through trauma? How does a good church react? A good church SHOULD be an environment where those who are going through such things can find support and true encouragement. Coming to such an environment can be difficult, as our emotions tend to react before our spiritual sense does. Sometimes we just are not ready to be the kind of help we should be. We have to come up higher. Sometimes we are the one going through trauma, and we are not ready to share. We have to be willing to be vulnerable. Of all places, being amongst the fellow called-out ones following in Jesus’ footsteps should be the most confidence-building place we could go.

A “Really Good Church” is God’s People - supporting one another through self-control, endurance, integrity, mutual support and praise and meaningful fellowship.

**Self-Control and Endurance Standing against our own emotions to better walk with our brethren:** James 5:9-16: *Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged* - When you start complaining, you are missing the point of coming together. You are being earthly and that is not why you come together. If you are “the” church, you stand for something much higher.

*We count those blessed who endured* - you can endure the difficulties quietly. Work it out privately as Matthew 18 instructs. Stand against your own emotions with self-control.

**Integrity Letting our spiritual maturity and Christlike character override our emotional propensity to create drama in our experiences:** <sup>12</sup>*But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.* Your humbly-stated word should be enough.

**Mutual Support and Praise Being close enough and willing enough to encourage our brothers help themselves even when they may feel awkward:** <sup>13</sup>*Is anyone among you*



suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; <sup>15</sup>and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. This is talking about spiritual sickness, not physical illness. The church can help to spiritually build up those who need it.

**Meaningful Fellowship** Being vulnerable enough to speak and listen about the hard things in life: <sup>16</sup>Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. The congregation should be focused on a high enough spiritual plane that we can accept that vulnerability with grace, love and compassion. Sometimes people make mistakes and you want to say, "What were you thinking?!" This is not the time. They need to be put back together and encouraged spiritually.

**Foundational Church Building Block:** The church is strong healthy and vibrant when its members take on deep and heartfelt care for one another as their personal responsibility.

**Early church meetings - the very beginning, after Pentecost:** Acts 2:46-47: They needed each other instead of a big, fancy building. **One more example of our mutual support:** Galatians 6:1-5: All of this shows that a "really good church" is not a place to go, rather it is an environment that needs feeding by all who are present! Bottom line: I am responsible! Make the congregation better by your contributions and presence.

**What about diversity? Is there room for real human diversity in a "really good church"?**

Diversity can be a tricky thing. The world's definition of diversity tends towards an "anything goes" approach while the biblical definition of diversity is clearly in line with focused principles. It is this latter diversity that is sought after in the context of spiritual growth within any "good church." Is there room for diversity? Yes. But what kind?

**Early church meetings before and after the Apostle Paul's conversion:** Acts 8:3  
Colossians 4:15

A "Really Good Church" is God's People - encouraging its members with vastly different abilities to come together and work as small parts of a well-oiled machine for the sake of the Gospel.

**It is easy to compete, compare and judge accordingly. There is no place for that in the body of Christ:** 1 Corinthians 12:14-27 The call of the church is for the very purpose of diversity and purposeful inclusion! That's God's plan. If you are a "toe," you could grumble that you are not an eye, an ear or even a pinkie finger! OR, we can say, "God has granted me the great privilege of providing the little edge of balance that nobody else can provide, because I am the little toe on the left foot." That toe plays a role. The idea is to find that God put us there to supplement everything else. If all those different parts were not there, it would not work. Further, God has designed this body with humility and mutual respect as primary prerequisites. It does not matter if you are the least talented individual among those you meet with. What matters is that you are there. Humility reigns over everyone. All have an equal standing before Christ because none are worthy. Our fellowship should thrive on this diversity and mutual care for this brings the energy of life.

**Foundational Church Building Block:** The church is strong, healthy and vibrant when its members wholly accept their diversity and humbly realize that each one is but a small yet important part of the whole which comprises the body of Christ.

**Early church meeting:** Acts 12:11-12: They worked together in a prayer meeting for the Apostle Peter. The church is the people and the people - each of them - have a responsibility to bring spirituality, their contribution, their desire for growth and to learn with them. Work together as a unit. That is what makes a truly "good church." It is what is inside your own heart and mind.

**So, what makes a church a "good church"?**  
**For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...**  
**Think about it...!**