

Why should you leave your church?

Before anything else, we need to be very clear about why we participate in our church. The biblical concept is to participate, identify with, and be a part of, and not just attend. There are obligations beyond just attending, such as praying for those brethren there, supporting the work of God that they are doing, formal membership, and in general being a participating member of the church. It is a sin to just “visit” a church without committing to it (as a permanent situation). In **Romans 10:9**, Paul instructed us as children of God to make a public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. This is not a work, but it is strong evidence of your confidence in Jesus as your Savior. **The community of the church is a gift of God to the people of God.** We are members one of another (**Rom 12:4-5**), and we are united in Christ (**Eph 4:15-16**), and this spiritual union is a picture of the church (his relationship with the members). We eat together (**Eph 4:4-5**), and we bear one another’s burdens (**Gal 6:2**), and at times one greatly sacrifices for another (in **Acts 4:32** they sold their homes to supply the needs of their brethren). This is a community built upon forgiveness of another (**Col.3:13**), and in which the love of God is shown by how we treat one another (**Jn 13:34**). Jesus death, his great love for us, formed this community (**Eph 5:25**), and his love for us is intensely linked with our living this same kind of love among the community of faith.

Is it right to leave your church?

Paul instructed Timothy to be strong, and to commit the gospel **2Tim 2:2** “to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The idea is not that they were “perfect”, but that they were already living the principles of God in their own life. Later he says, **2Tim 2:15** “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Paul saw that false and erroneous doctrine “leads more and more to ungodliness.” (**2:16**) He spoke of the ministries of Hymenaeus and Philetus

which “eats as a canker” (gangrene or cancer) in **2:16-17**. Far from being wrong to leave a bad church, this is the command of God. In **2Tim 2:19**, Paul orders every believer, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ **depart from iniquity**” obviously referring to those who were under these apostatizers ministries. God’s command is to “**get out from under their influence!**” Paul sums up this in **2:22**, “but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” We should understand that it is not acceptable to change or lower the Bible standard, nor ignore or alter God’s commandments just because that is the church closest to you. Even though you end up being alone, you should maintain biblical standards, and if such is your case, evangelize and form a group in your area of good doctrine and practice and call a good pastor.

Reasons to leave your church

(1) They don’t preach the Word of God, explaining the very words of God (the Bible) so we can understand it. It should be obvious that they are using some “other authority”, and they will have a different (non-biblical) focus for their activities and teachings, often resorting to profane and vain babblings that do not cause holiness (**2:16**). **The unvarying fruit of a good biblical ministry is holiness among those that preach the Word as much as among those who listen to it being preached.** A bad church or bad ministers “err from the truth... (and) overthrow the faith of some” (**2:18**). So the central goal of every biblical ministry is to increase your faith and better relationship with Jesus Christ, not the making money, controlling the membership, or personal fame and glory. Pray about what is the central goal of your church, and is it really seen in what is done, and how it is done. Every valid church focuses on the Christian faith as the Bible presents it. **Jude 1:3** “exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.” So every valid and good church will defend and promote through teaching, practice, and example the true faith. Central to

this faith is the salvation, the gospel for the unsaved, and spiritual intercession for the unsaved, and the promotion of love and spiritual edification between the brethren. “Church” has to do with coming together, congregating with other Christians where all are spiritually edified. The common foundation is pure doctrine.

2John 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. **10** If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: **11** For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. To participate in the ministry, to bless or give your approval by attending, associating, donating to, or otherwise supporting these people is a great error and sin. **1Tim 5:22**. To not have healthy doctrine is the primary reason why you do not congregate or associate with them.

(2) Because there is no real emphasis on repentance. Simply put, each believer should be marked by his efforts at following God, and for his activity and attitude in leaving off sin to walk in the justice of God. All churches are composed of individuals that are sinners. **1Jn 1:8, 10** tells us that we (John is writing to believers here) are deceiving ourselves and calling God a liar if we deny that we have sin. A good church is marked by its an atmosphere of reproving, reproaching, and denouncing sin, and the actual integral members of the church (especially its leaders and spokesmen) are marked by their repentance, victory over sin. Obedience in one area of life does not counterbalance disobedience in another. Nobody will see heaven without holiness (**Heb 12:14**), and a good church is composed of members who strive to live like their Savior.

Perhaps the most frequent problem causing people to consider leaving their church is because of open, unrepented sin in the leadership. The preacher has most of the blame here. If he is not constantly rebuking sin, and pressing the church to live in victory through repentance, he is not

doing his job. The church at times will allow a sinning minister to continue in his office when it should disqualify him (no longer “blameless”). Remember, unconsciously you will take on the moral set (morality) of those that stand before you each Sunday. Set no wicked thing before your eyes. In **2Tim 2:5** Paul describes the situation of the minister as having to “strive lawfully” or he does nothing worthy of God. It is very important that your pastor (and those ministers with him) should fulfill the requirement for a bishop (**1Tim. 2:12-15, 3; Titus 1**). Some key factors that should trigger warnings is a lack of kindness, a lack of a clean personal life (especially in sexual matters), being covetousness, any bad testimony, or being a hypocrite (**1Pe 5:1-3**). Leaders should step down if they fall. We learn morality by instruction from the principles of the Word of God via preachers who personally live what they try to teach us. If they don’t preach the Word, or they don’t live it actually, then we will still learn from them, but since they are hypocrites and disobedient, we learn those two points, not anything biblical.

Christian Liberty

Gal 2:4 *And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

Another very common factor that causes people to leave a church is the breach of their Christian liberty, and this is a mark of a cult in formation or one already formed. As Paul says in Gal 2:4, the false prophet wants to reduce us to slavery under him. Also in **Acts 20:29-30**, Paul again reveals the existence of raving wolves wanting to drag the brethren into discipleship under their control. They use “perverse” or twisted things. Every Christian should worship God by serving one another. The

Christian conscience is what should motivate our actions and service, not psychological methods. But the wolf uses these astute tactics of manipulation and force people into service to him, instead of to God and the brethren. Voluntary service, born of love, is very different from what he wants, absolute control and obedience to him.

There is no love.

In **Acts 20:29**, Paul describes the wolves as “*people who do not forgive the flock.*” Obedience to the gospel preached by the Apostles is the mark of faithfulness. doctrine always produces holiness **1 Tim 3:6**.

1John 4:1 *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. 7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

So we contrast a man of God with a false prophet by his profound love and service (**Mat 21:34**) manifested toward the brethren, and likewise his life and ministry is dedicated and saturated by love and service one for another, without selfishness.

How should I leave my church?

There should be a formal relationship between you and your church (you should have a normal membership there), and when you leave your church, you should officially break that relationship, advising them as to the reasons for your leaving. You should not just stop attending and start at some other church. Your reasons should be logical and biblical, reasons that are not doubtful or petty. You should express these reasons to the pastor or leadership, and if the pastor is personally involved perhaps other leaders or principle men of the church should likewise know. It may also be prudent NOT to involve or tell other regular members.

When is it time to leave your church?

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Phil 2:2 *Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind.*

Every good Christian will have a serious relationship with a group of brethren (a local church) of the same faith and practice that you have, and if you have incorporated yourself into their activities and fellowship, leaving will be difficult, and it should be. Your reasons for leaving should be taken because of definite events, attitudes, practices, or doctrines in that church that make you feel that you are “not the same as they are”, that they do not have the same love of Christ as you, because they do not follow Christ according to Scripture (in teachings, doctrine, practices, attitudes, etc), there is a rupture between you that forces your physical separation from that group. You should first try to examine your own spirit, to see if you are wrong, then talk with leaders in the church group to try and resolve the problem. After prayer, no resolution, you need to go to the pastor or leaders and tell them you are troubled, and will seek another church.