

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

February 24

2019

WHAT ARE PEOPLE LOOKING FOR IN A CHURCH?

At this very moment hundreds of thousands of our fellow-Americans are looking for a church (or, as some express it, "*a church home*"). They are looking (1) because they have recently moved to a new area, (2) because they have drifted and are now ready for a renewal of religious interest in their lives, or (3) because they have become unhappy with "their old church." What are they looking for? What do they hope to find? What do they feel they need?

1. Some are looking for a church that is like the former church they were affiliated with, most for no other reason than tradition or custom. They don't want any change from the religion they have become accustomed to.

2. Some are looking for a church (building) that is convenient to where they live, one that is within easy driving distance. They don't want to have to drive very far to get to "the services."

3. Some are looking for a church made up of friendly people who will make them feel welcome and wanted. They don't want one whose members seem cold and formal.

4. Some are looking for a church that will give them a sense of belonging and of importance. They don't want a church whose members just never seem to accept them.

5. Some are looking for a big church because they prefer to just blend in with the crowd. They don't want a church that is so small

that they can be missed at services and that they have to take some active role.

6. Some are looking for a small church because they want to be able to know all the members and "smaller churches are usually friendlier and more like a family." They don't want a church so big that "you can't tell the members from the visitors."

7. Some are looking for a church that is engaged in doing a lot of "*good works*." They don't want a church that isn't into solving "*world problems*" and committed to "*social reform*" and "*community improvement*."

8. Some are looking for a church that sponsors a lot of youth activities and family affairs. They aren't interested in a church that doesn't have parties, picnics, dinners, suppers, games, teams, clubs, exercise and health programs, classes for hobbies and crafts, etc.

Now, if you will look back over that list. There is not a word about God, or Christ, or the Bible, or the gospel of Christ, or salvation from sin, or soul, or heaven, or eternal life. People need to open their Bibles, and read the New Testament, and find out why Jesus built His church, and find out what a congregation of God's people is supposed to be, and to teach, and to do. Churches existed in the New Testament for the purpose of ministering to the spiritual needs of men, for the purpose of glorifying God, for the purpose of teaching God's word, for the purpose of saving the lost and edifying the saved. When a group of Christians constitute a church, they do not have to wonder what God wants of them. The lives they are to live individually, the organizational arrangement they are to have, the doctrine they are to teach, the collective worship they are to engage in, the collective work they are to do are all clearly defined in the New Testament.

Permit me to offer some suggestions:

1. Look for a church that respects the sovereignty of God and the authority of Jesus, the son of God.
2. Look for a church that respects the Bible as the inspired word of God, and the gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation.

3. Look for a church that strives to be like churches you can read about in the New Testament - in name, in worship, in organization, in teaching, in work.
4. Look for a church that is concerned about lost souls and eternal destinies.
5. Look for a church that ministers to the spiritual needs of men.

Bill Crews



WHAT DO WE HAVE TO OFFER

Softball teams, chicken dinners, ice cream socials, psychologists, live bands, movies, sports, plays, etc. These are the things that many modern churches have to offer. They cater to the "whole man" and offer everything from sports and all kinds of entertainment to various kinds of counselors and self-esteem workshops. The modern concept of being a church has developed into a free-for-all-do-what-you-want-just-satisfy-my-every-whim debacle. The world thinks that the church exists just to care for social concerns – they shouldn't have any "religious" or moral influence at all. If they want to feed the poor and help the homeless, that is fine, but if they want to preach God and moral values, they should just keep it to themselves. Sadly, many modern churches have done just that.

The Lord's church was never built to satisfy the whims of the social man. Read the New Testament. *Never* do we find the church trying to feed all the poor of the world. *Never* do we find the church trying to "make disciples" of the nations (Matthew 28:19) by offering ball teams and ice cream. *Never* do we find the church pandering the social whims of man. That's just not the work that the Lord gave the church to do. We may think that such work is "nice" and "compassionate," but the Scriptures do not reveal that work for the church.

I do not mean to sound unsympathetic to the social desires of mankind. Those things have a place, and as individuals we have

obligations to our fellow men. But the point we must understand is this: *we can feed the world, entertain the world, and play with the world, but such things do not save souls!* And this brings us right back to our functions as a church.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), a work infinitely more important than providing temporary shelter. He gave the same charge to His disciples (Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:18-20), who were to pass it on to the ones they taught (2 Timothy 2:2). Every local church is the pillar and support of the truth in their community (1 Timothy 3:15). This is our job. This is our work.

What do we have to offer? Nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). We have no gimmicks, no carnal appeal. We have only the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). That is enough to convert the lost. That is enough to satisfy the inner man (Matthew 5:6).

We cannot compete with the churches of the world, nor do we wish to. We want only to hold up the cross of our Lord. It is by this that all would be drawn to Him (John 12:32). Let's be satisfied with that.

T. Doy Moyer

Belleville church of Christ
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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 443-1938