



BANNER of *Love* MINISTRIES

10 Signs It's Time to Find a New Church

1. They pride themselves in an “under an hour” service.

In this fast-paced, on-the-go generation, there is a trend to cram everything we need to know into short little sound bites. Yet, can this style of presentation really lead to mastery of any concept? Surely anyone attending University would spend countless hours a week studying and listening to lectures. The job of the local church body is to make disciples by teaching and training them up into the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:15). How is that supposed to be done in under an hour a week?

How far have churches strayed from the scriptural example of teaching and discipleship?! Remember Jesus? He taught for so long that —more than once— they ran out of food and he had to multiply it so he could then continue teaching! Or what about the model of Paul and the early church who taught for so long that people had to be raised from the dead?

And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, “Do not be troubled, for his life is in him.” When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted. Acts 20:9-12

This goes to show that the model of these shortened services is not so much about discipleship, but more so about appeasing a guilty, culturally Christian conscience as quickly as possible. Here's some coffee, some catchy tunes, and a 20 minute teaching with one out-of-context verse from the Message Bible to help you save face, make you feel better, and send you on home without any lasting result. Guys, don't settle for this. Expect more. The true body of Christ has so much more to offer than this. Look for a church that will actually feed you, challenge you, and raise you up as a true disciple who can then go on to feed and train up others, regardless of how long that takes each week.

2. The go-to pulpit Bible is the Message or Passion translation.

Don't worry. We're not about to endorse the King James Version as the only inspired translation — though, it is a great translation. There are many good translations of the Bible, but let the emphasis be on the word *translation*. Our qualm with the Message, the Passion, and others like them is that they are not translations at all, but someone's paraphrase of the scriptures along with their opinion and interpretation of God and His Word. So if the only scripture reading you are getting on a Sunday morning is from one of these paraphrases, it says a lot about your church's stance on the Word of God. The Bible, simply read, is highly controversial and it requires boldness and masterful teaching. If leadership willingly chooses not to read the Bible as is, it is a clear warning sign that they have compromised the true gospel and are more concerned with pleasing people and endorsing the opinions of man.

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God. John 12:42-43

Find a church that has no fear of the public reading of the entire Bible, from a heart of love, looking to save and disciple those who hear.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 1 Timothy 4:13

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. Mark 8:38

3. Your pastor resembles a celebrity. Or, in fact, he actually is one.

Celebrity preachers and TV mega church pastors are all the rage. We are living in a Christian celebrity culture where most believers can quote these preachers (who have become household names) before they can quote the words of Jesus. Day by day, more churches are jumping on the bandwagon, manufacturing their personally branded method of walking in the faith. Then the little guys are imitating the look, dress, and teaching style of the big wigs in an attempt at sharing in that ministry's success. Entering into *the house* of God has become tantamount to stumbling into idolatry, as believers seek the teachings and programs of man instead of God. The role of a true pastor is to lead people to Christ, not to themselves. We as Christians are called to be followers of Christ, not these ministries. As Paul pointed out,

For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. 1 Corinthians 1:11-17

What happened to the simplicity of devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3)? Shouldn't it be enough to follow the teachings of Jesus and keep His commands? In reference to John the Baptizer, Jesus said, "among those born of women there is no one greater than John" (Luke 7:28). Talk about the best book endorsement ever! But did John then become self-promoting? No. Living off in the wilderness, eating locusts, and wearing camel hair, John didn't have a self-promoting bone in his body. His attitude as a true friend of the Bridegroom was, "He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

4. The sermon for tithes and offerings is longer than the actual sermon.

The Bible has a lot to say about giving, and I have no problem with teaching on biblical tithing from the pulpit. On the other hand, we've all been to a meeting that feels more like a time share sales pitch than a church service. It's in these moments I'm always reminded of the scripture, "*Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Unfortunately, there is such a thing as a money preacher church. These guys have always been around. Paul himself dealt with them,

...and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the

love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:5-10

It saddens us that we actually have to add this to the list. If you are in a church like this, we lovingly ask you to seek help in finding a new one. These men are not true pastors, who —like Jesus— would lay themselves down for their sheep. They instead are using people's need for God to feed their own greed and ego. The kingdom of God, His love, healing and miracles are not for sale. Get out from under that manipulation and control quickly before it's too late. Yet, be careful not to overreact like so many have, and run away from the church and any reference to giving altogether. There are good churches and pastors out there who will actually selflessly love you and care for you in Christ, without personal gain.

5. The leadership or environment of your church is abusive and controlling.

Submission to God's authority and the leadership He has put in place is a constant theme of scripture. As believers, we fall into very spiritually dangerous territory when we refuse to submit ourselves to God's authority and leadership.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

That being said, there are occasions when leadership and the resulting church environment can be abusive and controlling, violating their God-given position of love and service to the body of Christ. Peter charged leaders,

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 1 Peter 5:1-4

There are situations when leaders abandon their posture of Christlike servant leadership to instead *lord over* those entrusted to their care. Though godly leaders are charged to *reprove, rebuke, and exhort*, it is to be done in love and *with great patience and instruction* (2 Timothy 4:2). Behavior like manipulation, intimidation, public humiliation and ridicule, meddling in other's affairs and decisions, telling people where to go, what to do, and who they can and cannot marry, etc. should not be tolerated in God's church or leadership. Even more so, no leader in Christ should ever manipulate a believer into illicit, illegal, or sinful acts (2 Timothy 3:1-9).

Do not submit yourself or your family to this abusive authority. Leave this church immediately. Forgive that church and leadership for their sin, surrendering them to Christ's judgement, knowing that He is the *Chief Shepherd*. Then, find a good church with godly leadership that will lovingly keep watch over you and help you find healing from your hurt.

6. You're taught "God's in charge, but not in control."

If this above statement is true, then GOD HELP US! This is one of the major deceptions sweeping through the church in our day. Many preachers and teachers subscribe to this teaching because, "A God of love wouldn't ... (insert judgement here)." Or, the famous question we're all asked, "If God is love, how could he allow...(insert tragedy here)" Or the statement is reworked into "God's

in charge, but He's left us in control." If that's true, I'm done, because only Jesus Himself can sort out our wickedness (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). I will remind you of what the Lord said about Himself through Isaiah the prophet,

That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these. Isaiah 45:6-7

"Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker— an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands'?" Isaiah 45:9

He is the Sovereign Lord! Go read the end of the book of Job where the Lord Himself speaks from the whirlwind (Job 38-42).

Many hold to the above beliefs because they can't explain everything, or they don't want to embrace a God who still judges. But, we can understand so much because through the Holy Spirit and the scriptures, the Father has disclosed Himself to us (John 14:21). But can anyone explain all that God is doing or has ever done?

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. Romans 11:33-36

At the end of the day it comes down to true faith. Faith is not believing God is real, but trusting Him in all situations — even the ones we don't understand or cannot explain.

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

After _____ (insert God's judgement, hardship, trial, persecution, tragedy here), do you believe He is still good?

For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100:5

If you are in a church that doesn't teach the complete sovereignty of God you will eventually be tossed back and forth (Ephesians 4:14). Those questions we started with will plague you and lead you to unbelief. Jesus is the Rock! Build on Him with full assurance, knowing that when the storm comes — if you trust in Him completely— you will not fall.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:24-27

7. You're never taught the Old Testament in context, or maybe never hear it preached at all.

I'll ask you a question before we even get into this one. First, read the following scriptures and then see if you can answer.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

Ok, so the question is: What *word of God, scripture, and sacred writings* was Paul referring to?

The answer... (drum roll please) the Old Testament, as we call it. There was no New Testament at this time, because it had not been compiled yet. Paul's letters themselves make up a majority of the New Testament, and I'm sure Paul didn't know His letters would eventually become canonized. So, if Paul, through the Holy Spirit, is teaching us to "*Know the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,*" then —if we say we are Christians— we are under obligation to know the Old Testament.

To really put it to bed, what scriptures did Jesus teach us from? Again, He taught us from what we call the Old Testament. Who is Jesus?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. John 1:1-5

So if Jesus is the "Word made flesh," all the words of the Old Testament are the words of Jesus. The Old and The New cannot be separated.

For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" John 5:46-47

The Lord Himself has written the Old and the New.

When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God. Exodus 31:18

"This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, And on their mind I will write them," Hebrews 10:16

So it begs the next question, "Why is it not taught?" Whether the motivation is dualism (a heresy that the God of the Old Testament is different than Jesus revealed in the New Testament), anti-law, hyper grace, replacement theology, political correctness, etc. you should heed the sign that it is purposely being left out. Whatever the reasoning behind it, it is negligent and a cutting and pasting of who God has revealed Himself to be. Don't stand in ignorance because of someone else's bias. Read the entire Bible for yourself and find a cover-to-cover, Bible teaching, Holy Spirit filled church that can teach and train you in the full knowledge of God.

8. Any reference to Israel and Jerusalem would split the church.

If, when you mention the nation of Israel or the Jewish people in your church... “those be fighting words” ... then there is a major problem. The Lord has made an everlasting, unconditional covenant with Abraham, his descendants (the Hebrews or Jewish people), and the land itself forever.

I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” Genesis 17:6-8

I say then, God has not rejected His people (Israel), has He? May it never be! Romans 11:1

God has neither rejected nor forsaken His people, but is restoring them to the land — and the greater plan— restoring them to Himself (Jeremiah 30). There is a deceptive teaching in the church called replacement theology that says God has rejected Israel and replaced her with the church. Nowhere in scripture will you find this. Only by man’s misinterpretation, twisting, and deception (as Paul warned the Gentiles in Romans chapters 9-11) has it become fact in most churches. If God can break an everlasting, unconditional covenant with Israel, who’s to say He will not do the same to us?! The scriptures are very clear — God cannot lie (Titus 1) and He who promised is faithful (Deuteronomy 30).

If you say you are a Christian, you need to know and be taught that Israel is the root that supports our faith (Romans, Chapters 9-11). We have a Jewish Savior and a Jewish Bible that was written by Jews about God’s chosen people, the Jews, from the homeland of the Jewish people — the land of Israel. Israel is the land and Jerusalem is the city (Matthew 5:35) where the *Christian* Messiah will rule and reign forever and ever, Amen (Jeremiah 3:17).

This will always be a divisive subject because Israel is *the apple of God’s eye* (Zechariah 2:8), and the devil hates what God loves. But, if we say we love God, we must love whom and what He loves.

If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen 1 John 4:20

9. You can’t remember the last time the preacher talked about Sin, Repentance, Hell, or Judgment.

Why is no one talking about these things, when Jesus himself was the most famous hell and judgement preacher?

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4:17

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED. Mark 9:43-44

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Matthew 25:46

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. John 5:25-29

The reality is that Jesus talked about sin, repentance, hell, and the coming judgement so often that to not mention these things means you are deliberately leaving them out. Why would someone do that? Either because they don't like it, or it makes them unpopular. Unfortunately, many churches are falling into that camp of not liking it —or worse— not believing in it. This is truly startling.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Romans 10:13

Preaching on repentance from sin and warning people of eternal judgement to hell was the heart of Jesus' ministry and should therefore be the central heart of every church's ministry too. We preach hell, judgement, and convicting messages because we love our neighbor and long for them to be saved from the coming wrath of God. Every single one of us needs to attend a church that preaches hell *with tears in their eyes*, because we need to be reminded of its reality so we may "take heed lest we fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

10. You never hear teaching on the soon return of Jesus.

The thought might have just popped into your head, "No one knows the day or the hour."

Frankly, basing your whole theology on a verse taken out of context about the second coming of Jesus might show there is an issue. The entire Bible —start to finish— is about Jesus' comings. Every prophet, except for Jonah, prophesied about the second coming of Jesus. Jesus Himself taught us about His second coming. In every letter written by Paul, Peter, John, etc. they all teach us about the second coming. It's pretty obvious the Lord wants us to know about His soon appearing! How truly grieving that this is one of the least preached sermons from the pulpit. It's the believer's true hope!

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. Titus 2:11-14

There are a million and one reasons why churches will say they don't preach this message. "No one knows"... "It's too confusing,"... "It was supposed to happen in the year 2000,"... "It all happened already..." But regardless of your theology or opinion on this subject, the fact is that Jesus is coming back to judge the living and the dead.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31

This is the main reason the message of Jesus' second coming is not taught. It's not the Jesus that people want. This message will convict, confront, challenge, and not *grow* this modern *church* in the way they want. People want the "God is love," hippie Jesus that won't judge anyone. But this is a lie from satan himself to deceive and try to lead people to another "jesus" (Matthew 24:5).

To the believer, the message of Jesus' return should not be "scary" but the greatest news ever! For, if we are in Him and He is in us (John 14:20) and we keep His commandments (John 14:21), then we will have no fear of the coming judgement because we will know,

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 1 John 4:18

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. Hebrews 9:28

If you are in a church that doesn't even talk, let alone teach, about the Lord Jesus' return, how can the members of that church be *eagerly awaiting Him*? Jesus Himself warns us about the deception in the last days we live in (Matthew 24) and that we need to be on the alert.

"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 24:42-51

The whole point of these parables, along with Matthew 25, is to teach us to "be on the alert" — Not to say no one knows. So I challenge you, be on the alert, in a true church, looking for the blessed hope!