

GUIDE Nº 9 OF 15 · FREE

Finding Fellowship

Why you need a church family — and how to recognise a healthy one

— HEBREWS 10:25 (KJV)

A letter to you, dear friend

Dear friend, God never designed the Christian life to be lived alone. A coal removed from the fire soon goes cold, however brightly it once burned; a believer removed from fellowship faces the same danger. Yet 'going to church' can also confuse a new believer: many buildings, many names, many claims. Which one? What should you look for? What if you were hurt in a church before? This guide answers gently and honestly.

You will see from the Bible how the first believers lived — devoted to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers — and you will receive a simple, practical checklist for recognising a healthy church family, plus counsel for settling in once you find one. Your Father has a family prepared for you. Let us go and find them together.

The first church: a pattern of belonging

Open Acts chapter 2 and watch the first believers. Three thousand were saved in one day — and notice what happened next. They did not scatter to private spiritual lives. They 'continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.' They met in the temple and from house to house. They shared meals and possessions, praised God together, and the Lord added to them daily. Fellowship was not an event they attended; it was a life they shared.

Four marks stand out, and they still mark healthy churches today. Teaching: the apostles' doctrine — the Bible taught faithfully. Fellowship: real relationships, not just crowds. Breaking of bread: the Lord's table and shared meals — worship and warmth together. Prayers: a people who actually pray, together, expecting God to act. When you visit a church, quietly look for these four. Where they live, believers grow.

Notice also the result: 'having favour with all the people.' A healthy church is good news to its neighbourhood — kind, honest, generous. You are looking for a family like that, and such families exist in every city and village, large and small. Do not settle for isolation while you search; visit, pray, and let God settle you.

> *"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*
> **— Acts 2:42, 47 (KJV)**

Why you cannot walk alone

Be honest about your need. Alone, you have no one to teach you when you misunderstand, no one to lift you when you fall, no one to warn you when you drift, no one to pray when you are too weak to pray. The Bible's picture is a body: an eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.' Your gifts — yes, even as a new believer, your encouragement, your story, your hands — are needed by others, and theirs are needed by you. Isolation starves both you and the family you are avoiding.

Alone is also where temptation and doubt do their worst work. The enemy hunts the separated sheep. Many who 'stopped church' did not first stop believing; they first stopped gathering, and the cold crept in slowly. Hebrews warns us not to forsake assembling — and adds a reason full of love: so that we can exhort, encourage, one another. You gather not only to receive encouragement but to BE it. Some Sunday, your presence and your smile will be the exact medicine another believer needs.

If past church hurt is your obstacle, we honour that pain; some wounds in religious places are real and deep. Bring the wound to God, forgive as He enables you, and — when ready — try again, wisely, perhaps in a different fellowship, with eyes open and heart

guarded but not closed. Do not let a bad chapter confiscate the whole book God is writing with your life.

> *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."*
> **— 1 Corinthians 12:12 (KJV)**

What to look for: a simple checklist

Take this checklist visiting, over two or three visits, not one hurried impression. One: Is the Bible taught clearly and honoured as God's Word — sermons from Scripture, not merely opinions? Two: Is Jesus Christ central — His cross, His resurrection, salvation by grace through faith? Three: Do the people pray, worship sincerely, and live with evident love for one another — do they notice newcomers, visit the sick, help the poor among them? Four: Are the leaders godly, accountable and approachable — servants, not celebrities or tyrants; is money handled openly and honestly?

Five: Is there room for you to grow and serve — classes for new believers, small groups, honest answers to honest questions? Six: Does the church reach outward — evangelism, mercy to the community — or only inward? And seven, a quiet but vital one: do you sense the presence and peace of God there, and do mature believers you trust confirm this is a healthy house? No church is perfect — if you find one, do not join it, for you would spoil it — but a healthy church is recognisable by these fruits over time.

Be wary of clear red flags: a leader who cannot be questioned, teachings that contradict Scripture's plain gospel, pressure for money tied to promises of wealth, isolation from other believers and family, and any demand for secrecy about wrongdoing. God never asks you to surrender your conscience to men. A true shepherd welcomes honest questions; only wolves fear them.

> *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.”*
>
> **— Matthew 7:15-16 (KJV)**

Do this:

1. Visit a Bible-believing church this week; visit again before deciding.
2. Use the checklist quietly over two or three visits.
3. Ask the leaders directly: 'How do you help new believers grow?'
4. Pray about settling — then settle, rather than visiting forever.

Settling in: from visitor to family member

Once God settles you, commit. Attend faithfully — believers who attend only when convenient receive only a fraction of the family’s blessing, and give only a fraction of theirs. Arrive early enough to greet people. Learn names. Join the new-believers class or a small group where people know your story and can walk with you closely. Big services inspire; small groups transform — aim for both.

Find a place to serve, however small: greeting, cleaning, singing, helping with children under supervision, visiting the elderly. Serving turns a congregation into your family faster than anything else; we love what we invest in. Give as God enables you — cheerfully, proportionately, as worship, learning the joy of generosity without pressure or show.

Expect to be both blessed and occasionally disappointed — these are people, growing like you. When offended, follow Jesus’ way: forgive quickly, speak directly and kindly where needed, refuse gossip. The believers who grow old and fruitful in a church are not those who never saw faults; they are those who learned to love a real family with grace — the same grace they themselves need daily.

> *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."*
> **— 1 Corinthians 12:27 (KJV)**

Fellowship beyond Sunday

True fellowship spills into the week. Open your home and your table as you are able; accept invitations; share meals, burdens and joys. The early believers went house to house, and some of the deepest growth happens over ordinary food with honest conversation. Join a midweek prayer meeting or Bible study — the smaller fire where questions are asked and prayers are personal.

Build two or three close friendships within the fellowship — people you can call in a crisis, confess a struggle to, and pray with regularly. Choose friends who pull you toward Jesus: honest, growing, kind. Your closest company will quietly determine your direction; choose it on purpose, not by accident.

And keep the wider family in view: believers in other churches are your brothers and sisters too. Honour them, learn from them, never speak contemptuously of Christ's body. One day in heaven the denominational signs all come down, and only the family remains. Practise that unity now, starting with the family God has given you — and rejoice that you will never walk alone again.

> *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"*
> **— Psalm 133:1 (KJV)**

A PRAYER FOR MY CHURCH FAMILY

Father, thank You that You have not left me to walk alone. Lead me to the fellowship You have prepared for me — a family where Your Word is taught, Your Son is honoured, and Your people truly love. Heal any old wounds, make me faithful, teachable and quick

to serve, and use me to encourage others as others encourage me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Verses to hold on to

Keep these verses near you. Read one each morning. Say it aloud. God's Word will hold you on days when feelings are weak.

> *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."*
> **— Hebrews 10:24-25 (KJV)**

> *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*
> **— Matthew 18:20 (KJV)**

> *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*
> **— John 13:35 (KJV)**

> *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."*
> **— Ephesians 2:19 (KJV)**

You are not walking alone

Dear friend, you have finished this guide — well done. Keep it near your Bible and return to it whenever you need it. Growth is day by day, and your Father is patient, present and proud of every honest step you take toward Him.

If you would like someone to pray with you, answer your questions, or walk with you in these first steps, our free Salvation Follow-Up team would be honoured to hear from you. Visit slgrace.com and open the chat — ask for the "Salvation Follow-Up" desk. It is completely free, and you will be received with love.

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May the Lord bless you and keep you, make His face shine upon you, and give you peace — today and all your days. (Numbers 6:24-26)