

Faith in Action: Finding a Church

Discussion Question:

1. What do you like about college?
2. What did you look for in a college?
3. Recount how you felt on your first day of college. (Classes, orientation, etc)

1. *Why do I need to look for a church?*

- a. God gave us the Church to grow and be strengthened.
 - i. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4:11-16 *ESV*)
- b. Because even the strongest Christians in college can drift away.
 - i. One of the greatest tragedies I see as a pastor and former InterVarsity staff member is former students allowing their passionate college faith to slip away. The drifts are gradual. And more often than not, the drifting occurs because folks with good intentions do not connect to a church right away after college. "You Will Need an Anchor" - John Teter (2009)

2. *What should we be cautious of?*

- a. Looking for too much comfort.
 - i. Most Christians who look for a new church home visit first one church and then another, searching for one that "feels comfortable." This method rarely works. Did you feel comfortable on your first day of high school? How about the day you met your future in-laws for the first time? Most new experiences are a little frightening. If you run from church to church trying to replicate one you've attended for the last five years, you'll eventually get used to being a visitor who occupies a pew with strangers for an hour or two every Sunday morning. You might as well watch the Church of the Week broadcast on TV. "How To Find A New Church Home" - Jeffrey Dennis (1991)
- b. Looking for the young adult version of your college experience
 - i. Contextualization and commitment are key. Sermons and church activities are not usually as specific to your life situations as they might have been

during an InterVarsity large group talk. Church competes with other weekend options such as chilling with friends, travel, weddings or sleeping in. Most likely, there will not be an InterVarsity Bible study leader walking you to church like he or she did to large-group meetings. To be honest, your spiritual life after college, and your ability to get around the barriers, will come down to one thing: How badly do you want it? Church will be what you put into it. (Teter 2009)

ii. Just remember that whatever church you do choose to get involved with, it will not be InterVarsity. It never will be. Your time at college was for a season and the lessons you learned while participating in InterVarsity hopefully prepared you well for church life. So treasure your time in InterVarsity but do not cling to it. Take the lessons you have learned and find ways to apply them in a church context. (Teter 2009)

c. Looking for community

i. Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. Life Together Bonhoeffer (1954 p.21)

ii. The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer. Bonhoeffer (1954 p.19)

iii. Every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial. God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren and God Himself accordingly. (Bonhoeffer 1954 p.27)

iv. If we do not give thanks daily for Christian fellowship in which we have been placed, even where there is no great experience, no discoverable riches, but much weakness, small faith, and difficulty; if on the contrary, we only keep complaining to God that everything is so paltry and petty, so far from what we expected, then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ. (Bonhoeffer 1954 p.29)

- v. When a person becomes alienated from a Christian community in which he has been placed and begins to raise complaints about it, he had better examine himself first to see whether the trouble is not due to his wish dream that should be shattered by God; and if this be the case, let him thank God, for leading him into this predicament. But if not, let him nevertheless guard against ever becoming an accuser himself for his unbelief. (Bonhoeffer 1954 p.30)
- d. First impressions aren't everything.
- e. If you don't find one that suits your fancy 100%, just pick one and commit to it for six months.

3. What should we look for in a church?

- a. Biblically sound teaching
- b. Opportunities to serve
- c. Solid elders/leaders
- d. Community

4. Let's get practical.

- a. Pray.
- b. Prepare in advance before you graduate. Think of when you applied to schools. Did you just randomly pick which you would apply to or visit? Or did you do research and carefully consider where you were planning to spend the next few years of your life? How much greater is it then the place where you might spend even more time worshipping God?
- c. Pray.
- d. Look for churches that you might want to attend.
- e. Pray.
- f. Ask for recommendations and lowdown on churches that pique your interest.
- g. Pray.
- h. Make a list of ten or less
- i. Pray.
- j. Visit them on Sundays AND non-Sundays
- k. Pray.
- l. Have a good attitude.
- m. Pray.