

How to look for a "Church Home"

A **FRESH**
Perspective

By Pastor Tony Clark

Foreword by Brian Abeyta

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Calvary Chapel Newport News
361 Beechmont Dr.
Newport News, Virginia 23608

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Fresh Perspective

By Pastor Tony Clark

FOREWORD

My heart's desire is to see God's church make an incredible impact in our world.

As Christians, we long to see change occur in the world... but, where does change start? It begins with us! How can we expect the world around us to change if we aren't willing to make some much needed adjustments ourselves?

I believe Satan enjoys creating "discord amongst the brethren." Think about it. Satan employs the tactic of having people, both Christians and non-Christians, use the "world's" methods when it comes to looking for a place to honor God. However, we have to remember that, "we are not to be *conformed* to this world, but rather *transformed* by the renewing of our minds!"

If you are currently looking for that special, one of a kind "church home," rest assured you'll find it! However, understand that the most important factors in your search are to first, ask the Lord to direct you; and secondly, know what your desires are for a church home. Praying ahead of time and knowing what you want will make this process a lot less stressful. Matthew 7:9 encourages us that "if we ask for bread, God will not give us a stone." God wants you to be in a church where you can learn, grow, and serve Him cheerfully.

Most of the time when seeking a place of worship, we tend to look at what said place has to offer us externally. We must realize that more important than finding a place that fits your external needs, is to find a place that fits your internal needs. Ask God to give you a "Fresh Perspective" of what He has for you. May God richly bless you in your journey to serve Him!

Brian D. Abeyta

INTRODUCTION

As we step back and ponder our lives in the United States, it's obvious that Americans are unconsciously affected by the systems of this world. We live in a country of freedom. Freedom to reside where we'd like; drive around in whichever vehicle we choose to purchase; eat where we like; get our haircut the way we want; shop for groceries at the store of our choosing; get cellular service from a variety of vendors—basically, spend our finances any way we see fit. Yes, America is definitely the land of abounding opportunities.

I believe that having options is great. I rather enjoy being able to select from a wide range of choices and companies when it comes to my daily, weekly, monthly, and annual necessities. If I'm dissatisfied with the service I receive from one business, I simply go to a different establishment without ever experiencing any feelings of regret or sorrow.

The question we must ask ourselves is: "Do we execute this same mindset in our search for a permanent place of fellowship and church home?"

It's been said that roughly twenty-four percent (24%) of the churches today are declining in growth. Of those that are growing, seventy-five percent (75%) of the growth is a result of people "hopping" from one church to the next; and only 1% of all churches in America are growing as a result of new converts.

Let me encourage you to ask God for a "***Fresh Perspective,***" as you journey through this booklet.

Chapter 1

THE “HUNT”

- WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CHURCH -

Let's begin the journey by visualizing the definition of the word “hunt.” For me, I immediately reflect on the childhood memories of a certain activity associated with Easter. It was a thrill to know that rainbow colored eggs were hidden under bushes, amongst tree branches, and in other inconspicuous places just for me. As a child, my job was to diligently seek out the prize of as many eggs as possible. I could barely contain my excitement, knowing that what I was looking for, the egg, would eventually be found! This infamous activity is known as an “Easter egg hunt.”

For some, the word “hunt” may cause you to think of a person dressed in camouflage clothing. Picture it. The relentless hunter on the prowl, with a painted face, and a weapon in hand, bringing everything necessary to hunt the choice animal that's in season. (I know some men that dress like this even when it's not hunting season!)

Even though these are only two examples of the hunt experience, a common thread exists between them. As a child hunting for Easter eggs, I did so with great expectancy because not only did I know what I was looking for, I also knew I would find it. Likewise, rarely does a hunter come back without the success of his prized possession, his trophy kill. No matter how long he patiently sits, whether it be in a tree-filled forest or near the grassy marshland of a pond, he knows exactly what he's looking for and expects to find it.

Do you see the parallel in “hunting” and searching for a place of worship? When we're hunting for a church, we have to purpose to do so with an open mind about what God wants for us and with great expectancy that we'll find it. You see, not knowing

what you're looking for and a lack of expectancy is cause for frustrated hunting attempts that may take longer than anticipated or eventually end without much success. Remember, success is unlikely if you don't know what you're looking for. So, what are you looking for in a church home? If you've got some specifics in mind, great. But if you don't know what you are looking for, how will you know whether or not you've found it when it comes along? Here are five Biblical insights to help you with this important decision:

1) DOES THE CHURCH LIFT UP AND EXALT THE NAME OF JESUS?

Jesus said "In the volume of the book it is written of Me to do Your will O God" (Hebrews 10:7). He also said "Search the scripture; for in them you think that you have eternal life; these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

There must be an unprecedented exaltation of Jesus!

2) IS THIS A BIBLE-BELIEVING CHURCH?

Do they believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God? That every word was inspired by God? (2 Timothy 3:16,17 and Proverbs 30:4,5)

There must be an uncompromising trust that God's Word is sufficient!

3) IS IT A BIBLE-TEACHING CHURCH?

Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20 "Go and make disciples of all nations.... Teaching them all things I have commanded you." God told Moses in Exodus 20 to take the 10 commandments and teach them to the people.

There must be a sincere desire to teach the entire counsel of God, from Genesis to Revelation!

4) IS IT A BIBLE-REACHING CHURCH?

Do they reach out to the lost to try to win them to Christ? Are they community-oriented? Jesus said in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every

creature.” Acts 1:8, tells us “to be witnesses in Jerusalem (our homes), Judea (our neighborhoods), Samaria (our city), and to the ends of the earth” (outside of our country). *There must be a burden for the “lost!”*

5) IS IT A BIBLE-WORSHIPPING CHURCH?

Whether you are looking for traditional hymns or contemporary music, are they worshipping God according to the Bible? The Bible encourages us to bow down in worship (Psalm 95:6), to lift up holy hands in worship (Psalm 28:2, 63:2, 134:2, and 1 Timothy 2:8), to clap our hands in worship (Psalm 47:1), to be still and worship (Psalm 46:10). There are churches that practice a mild or extreme form of these expressions of worship, so look for the one that most closely fits your personality!

There must be a highly esteemed focus on worship!

Chapter 2

THE “HINDERER”

- WHAT THE “HINDERER” (SATAN) LIKES TO USE TO HINDER YOU -

The apostle Paul told the Thessalonian Believers that he tried to come to them time after time, but Satan hindered him from coming to minister to them (1 Thessalonians 2:18, Romans 1:13). Satan loves to hinder Believers from doing what God wants them to do for His kingdom; this includes finding a church. Why? Because the church is where we go for inspiration and weekly encouragement.

God has a tremendous love for the local church and He wants all of His children to be settled into one. Let's take a look at a few passages.

“ Hebrews 10:25 says *“not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the matter of some, but exhorting one another and so much more as you see the day of the Lord approaching.”*

“ Ephesians 2:19, *“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.”*

We often think we select our own church and that “hunting” helps us to determine the right home, when in actuality, scripture tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:18, *“God has set the members each one of them in the body, just as He pleased.”* God has a local church for each one of His children, and it is not God's will that His children jump, skip or hop from church to church.

Keep in mind, Satan wants to hinder us from finding a house of worship by convincing us that the methods we use to select a place to eat, where to shop for groceries or other services are the

same methods we should employ when selecting a church home. However, contrary to popular belief, searching for a church home is nowhere close to being in the same category and therefore, needs to be handled spiritually, *not* intellectually.

Chapter 3

THE “HOME”

- WHERE IS HOME? -

Dorothy from the “Wizard of Oz” said it best, “There is no place like home!” One songwriter expressed his sentiments when he wrote, “be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home.” This is true for a church home as well. When you’re at home, there is a sense of peace and rest. It’s comfortable and no matter the number of people there, it feels warm and cozy.

The same thing is true when you have found a “home” church. You will have a sense of peace and contentment that the Spirit of God agrees that you are at the “home” church where He wants you to grow and flourish.

Sometimes when you find that special place, you have to be prepared to experience the elements of family life. As with family, occasionally, you may experience disagreements and disputes. However, Proverbs 10:12 assures us that “love covers all sin.” Because Christ’s love flows in and through us, we can agree to disagree and still go on loving one another, just like at home.

We are living in a time where people treat church like they would treat their place of employment, the purchase of a home, or a marriage. On average, people change jobs and move to a different residence every 3 to 5 years; and the divorce rate is well over (fifty) 50% among Believers and non-Believers. These statistics show us the decline of commitment, or better yet, the lack of personal willingness to stand fast during and through tough times. The sad thing is that this lack of commitment is seen in church as well. People, on average stay at a church for 3-5 years and

some statistics show that after 2 years, church attendees are ready for what they call “something new.”

Have you found a “home” church yet? If not, why not? Know for certain, church “hopping” is one of Satan’s ways of weakening the local church. Don’t let Satan hinder you from being part of a local church. Don’t lose heart in your search for one —it really does exist. Your church “home” is just waiting on you and your gifts to show up so God can use you to help them grow in the way He desires. If you are not a part of a local church body, you are cheating the church that God has for you. In essence, you are robbing it of the gifts and talents that God has uniquely given you for the purpose of ministering to others. I’m reminded of what it says in Ephesians 4:16 *“From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”* This verse confirms that every Believer has a place in the body of Christ (the local Church), in order that the local church can grow in the way that Christ designed it to grow.

Chapter 4

“THE HELP”

- ASKING GOD TO GIVE YOU A “FRESH PERSPECTIVE” -

I believe another reason many people don't find the church that God has for them is because they look for a church from an incorrect perspective. Most people say, “What does this church have for me and my family?” “How can this church meet my needs, and the needs of my family?” “How can this church serve me?” “What if I don't fit in?”

These are legitimate questions; however, probably the most crucial question we should ask is, “Lord, how can the gifts and talents you've given me help the people in this church?” “Lord, what can I give to this church that will honor You?” Too many people look to get and not to give. If you are looking to receive anything of lasting value, you *must* be willing to give! Why? Because Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Another important issue is that of relationships. Relationships make us feel special. They enable us to bond with folks that are like-minded on both spiritual and non-spiritual issues and help instill a sense of camaraderie and *koinonia* (Greek word for fellowship).

All too often, people leave churches because they didn't establish a true connection with anyone... yet, these same individuals are usually the last ones to enter the building before the church service begins and the first ones to leave when the sermon is over! If there's an opportunity to greet other congregants, their demeanor is usually not what you would call “friendly.” The scriptures give us a heart searching verse to think about in Proverbs 18:24 - *“a man who desires friends, must himself be*

friendly” (ouch!). The point is, even if you’ve been hurt by previous relationships, don’t be afraid to step out and start new ones. Remember to look at the example of Jesus! He always reached out, even when He knew ahead of time that the people who said they loved Him would eventually turn their backs on Him and betray Him. Yet, it never stopped Him from establishing new relationships!

Finally, I believe a reason people have difficulty finding a church home is their expectation of what will happen when they find it. When coming to church, we should look for God to change us and to make us more like Christ. We should look to experience a personal encounter with God. Why? From the scriptures, we see two things happened when people had encounters with God: First, they were in awe of His Holiness, and second, they were aware of their own sin (Job 38, Exodus 20, Isaiah 6, Daniel 9, and Luke 5:8). As we come together in worship and for the study of God’s Word, we should be in awe of His Holiness, and we become aware of our own sin in the face of this Holy God. When we realize our own sin, we won’t spend time worrying about the sin of others. The teaching of God will instruct us on how we should live and fellowship with a Holy God.

When looking for a church, search with the attitude of, “Lord, help me to find a church that I can give of my time, gifts, talents and resources. Lord, help me to find a church where You can change *me*, instead of a church that I can change to cater to my needs.”

Jesus said “on this rock, I will build
my church.”

He WILL build His local church.

God doesn't need our help, but He still asks
for it... so that we may be blessed!

Call out to God and ask Him to
give you a ...

“Fresh Perspective!”



The purpose of this booklet is to help people to get rooted and planted into a local church. Psalm 1:3 says “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” Make not only a decision for Jesus Christ, but a commitment to Jesus Christ. Let this be you!!!

***Studies show that the
“Top 10 Reasons People Don’t Go to Church”
are because.....***

1. ***“The church just wants my money!”***
2. ***“I won’t fit in!”***
3. ***“I don’t need church; I can have church at home.”***
4. ***“I don’t have a lot of dress clothes!”***
5. ***“I do not know if I would like the music!”***
6. ***“It is not relevant to my day to day struggles, all I’ll hear is fire and brimstone preaching!”***
7. ***“I don’t want the distraction of noisy children during the service!”***
8. ***“I do not know anyone!”***
9. ***“I do not like to get up early on Sunday Mornings and I don’t want my whole day to be taken up by church!”***
10. ***“I am skeptical – there are too many hypocrites!”***

***Don’t allow any of these reasons to be YOUR excuse
for not finding a “church home!”***

Pastor Tony Clark is the Senior Pastor at Calvary Chapel Newport News, located in Newport News, VA. He established this church in 1994. His heart is to make “The Word Plain” for our daily living.



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