



THE COMPASS

A TOOL FOR DISCIPLERS

The Importance of Church

Conversation On the Journey

The Greek word that we translate into “church” is used to describe a local group of Christians, never a building. And yet, when we use the word today, what images come into mind? Stain-glass windows? A steeple and bells? A large gymnasium with folding chairs?

“Church” as we know it is pretty similar to what it’s been like for years around the world. People come together, taking comfort in their friends who are experiencing some of the same persecutions and sufferings. During the time together, a respected and trained leader reads from the Holy Scriptures and then a time of explanation, encouragement, and challenge usually follows. Somewhere during this “service” is a time for corporate and/or personal dedication, through prayer and often music.

Sounds a lot like Cru, doesn’t it? But we are a para-church organization, and that means we work alongside the church to help fulfill the Great Commission. But we don’t marry and we don’t bury. We do offer Bible studies, discipleship, training in evangelism, summer missions projects and opportunities to meet other Christians on your campus. Through personalized attention and connection with other students, God has positioned Cru in a pivotal place in your life. But we know that we are not the Church.

So, a church is a local gathering of Christians. A group of people. But there are many different churches in town. What’s the difference? Why so many? And what’s the benefit of going?

Those are great questions. In fact, those questions have been debated for ages, and major events in history, like the Reformation and different revivals, have split churches, divided families, and spawned new denominations. This article is not about how to choose the “right” denomination. But if denominational differences intrigue you, look up the writings of the church founders to do a little more research. Call pastors and ask for a copy of their statement of faith to ensure agreement on basic Christian creeds and doctrines.

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This Week’s Excursion

Today you get to help your disciple learn about church. Going to Cru each week is valuable, but Cru is not the church. Your goal today is to talk about the importance of church, and help your disciple take the first steps at getting plugged into one while here at school.

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But the question, “What’s in it for me?” can be answered...

One of the benefits of the local church is the exposure to different age groups. Picture the weekly meeting in your head. The oldest people there are your staff... and we’re not much older than you in some cases. What about young people? Your freshmen are the youngest.

We can find a lot of role models in church, too. If you didn’t grow up in a Christian home, you can learn about how Christian families work by watching some of them each week. Ever wonder what a Christian marriage looks like? Churches are full of couples figuring that out for themselves. What does a Christian mom or dad do? Get around some of them to figure it out.

Churches are usually made up of people from different parts of life. Have you wondered how your faith intersects with your major? There’s probably someone in your field at a local church. Why not get lunch together after a service, and ask questions about career planning and dealing with work issues.

It’s really amazing that God would show us His manifold wisdom through the creation of “one new man” out of all races and classes, with Christ as the head. That’s the church, the Body of Christ. Check out Ephesians 4 for more discussion on the diversity of the Body (Church), and our responsibility in it.

See, at Cru, you don’t get a representative sampling of the Body of Christ. By refraining from church participation, you get a really skewed idea of life. We are insulated on campus. By going to church, you have the opportunity to meet older and younger people, and people who are not in school.

But to meet them means getting involved in church and not just being a pew-warmer. Join a Sunday school class. Teach a Sunday school class or volunteer in the nursery. Tithe to your local church, for they shepherd and feed your Christian walk each week. Introduce yourself to a family, an older couple, or a few young people, and invite them to join you for lunch. Sign up for a conversational dinner. Ask questions at the information booth about how you can get involved and meet people. Then you’ll begin to see the beauty of Christ in a way that you’d never see if you only went to Cru each week.

Not only that, but you’ll discover another source for Biblical teaching in your church pastor. Take your own Bible each week and look up the text to make sure you agree with the interpretation and application. Take notes to really digest the content.

In Hebrews 10:24-25, the author is getting at a commitment, a customary habit of joining with others for corporate worship. It is another reminder that we were meant for relationships, and not for solely solitary spiritual moments.

Did you know that it is a job requirement for Cru staff to find a church home within three months of relocating? That’s how important a local body of believers is to Cru.

Next Steps

Take your disciple to church, if you haven’t already invited them to join you.

Talk about why you chose that church to attend while here at school. Help your disciple find a church home by grabbing a phone book and looking up churches in the area. Discuss some of the listings. Which ones are within walking distance? Discuss worship styles and doctrinal statements. Suggest some good churches, and discuss your concerns if you think your disciple is interested in an unhealthy church.

Here are some additional questions that may be helpful:

1. What might you miss out on if Cru was your church?
2. What do you like/not like about the church you attend at home?
3. If you had to, how would you describe the difference between denominations?
4. From what you know of the scriptures, what are the most important things to look for in a church?
5. How would you know if a church was not one you should attend? What would be the clues?

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A Few Easy Guidelines for Choosing a Church

1. Does the church demonstrate love?

In John 13:34-35, Jesus says that the world will know that we are His disciples by our love. So, how does that church give evidence of being a group of His disciples? Do you see the following: forgiveness, mercy, reaching out to others when they are in need, not showing favoritism, being open to people who may be “different,” etc.?

2. How does the church use the Bible?

Is the Bible the main part of the sermon, or is it used as an afterthought to undergird an idea or philosophy?

After a sermon, you should walk away with a better understanding of what the Bible says, not the argument the pastor wants to make.

3. What does the minister talk about? What are his passions and interests?

4. What do the members talk about?

Do they understand the pastor’s vision? Are they interested in learning more about how to put their faith into practice and living out what they hear in the sermon?

5. What does the Statement of Faith say?

You can request this from the Pastor or church secretary. Read it over and make sure that you agree and understand it. If you have questions, call the pastor for an appointment to discuss it.

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Side Trails

The Measure of a Church. Gene Gentz. Gospel Light.

Order at christianbook.com



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