

# Healthy Church Evaluation

## Introduction

The first thing we should understand about church is that a church is a group of people not a place. People make mistakes. People need help. People need to be loved. A place or a building can be built properly and remain that way. However, a group of people can change, make mistakes, get confused, or become distracted. This is why Christians must remember that a church is a group of people to love, serve, help, and be patient with them.

As we evaluate your church today, we are not doing so with anger, frustration, disappointment or pride. We help you evaluate your church because we love you and we all love Jesus. We want every church to be the best church possible for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are using the word “healthy” because it is helpful to think of the church as a body. In fact, the Bible says that we, as the church, are the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 12:27**). This means that the church is living and growing. However, just as our bodies can become sick and unhealthy, so can the church. Our church can make mistakes and therefore become unhealthy. When you become sick you often need the help of others. You need them to help you to the doctor, help you eat, and to pray for you.

When our bodies are sick we quickly ask for help from family, friends, doctors, and the church. There is no shame because we know that being sick is common. We also know that being sick is serious. We should also not feel shame if we find that our church is sick. However, we should be serious about it and ask for help to improve. If a sick person refused to receive any help or medicine and chose to remain sick, then we would say that the person is mad or sick in the mind. Therefore, even if a church is unhealthy in some ways or is lacking in some areas the church can still be healthy in mind if the people in it consistently strive to be conformed to the teachings of the Bible.

When we think of the church in a spiritual way, we can see that our church should reflect the image of God. Each of us were created by God to reflect His image to the world. However, because of our sin we fail to live the way we should. Through Jesus’ life on earth, his death on the cross, and his resurrection we find salvation when we trust in Him and repent of sin. Therefore, through Jesus we are able to grow in the likeness of God the Father as we are freed from sin. Growing in the image of God requires our daily efforts to study the Bible and live according to what we find there. This means we must constantly repent of our sins and make changes in our lives so that we can be a better reflection of God. However, we do not do this alone. We do it with our fellow church members.

Our church should also reflect the image of God. Our church should consistently compare itself to the Bible and make any changes needed to grow in the image of God the Father.

1. What can happen to the members if a church follows the Bible and grows in healthiness?
2. What can happen in your community or village if your church becomes healthy and follows the Bible?
3. Do you want your church to become healthy and follow the Bible?
4. Are you prepared to change yourself and your church?



## Biblical Preaching and Teaching

- If our bodies are to grow and be healthy we must eat healthy food. The spiritual food that our church eats is the preaching and teaching (**Romans 10:17**). Therefore, the first characteristic of a healthy church is a church that is serious about teaching and preaching God's Word instead of the thoughts of people (**1 Corinthians 1:18-21**).
  - A healthy church believes that the Bible is God's Word. They believe that the Bible is the final authority over everything the church believes and does. A healthy church believes that the Bible is perfect and has no mistakes (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).
  - When a church believes these things, it will make sure that every preacher and teacher teaches the Bible correctly (**Acts 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:15-26**). This means that a preacher studies the Bible and prepares to explain what God says in the Bible. He does not stand just to motivate people with babble. A preacher or teacher in the church will read a particular passage, explain what it means, and then help the church learn how to live according to the truths found in that passage (**2 John 9-11**). If a church allows someone to teach and preach their own thoughts, the people will be conformed to that person instead of God. The church should be growing in the image of God and that requires learning the truth of God in the Bible.
  - A healthy church also has members who love the Word of God in the Bible (**Psalms 119:9-16**) and study it at home so that they can follow God's way and not be led astray by false teachings (**Acts 17:11**).
1. When someone teaches or preaches in your church, do they pick many verses from different places in the Bible to support their idea?
  2. When someone in your church teaches or preaches do they choose a passage or chapter from the Bible and then help us understand God's thoughts from those verses?
  3. When you listen to the preaching and teaching in your church, do you feel like you are hearing the thoughts of God from the Bible or the thoughts of man?
  4. Do you feel like the people in your church are being equipped for the work of God by the preaching and teaching?



## Biblical Evangelism

- A healthy church is a church where all its members have entered the church because they heard the gospel message and responded by repenting of sin and putting their faith in Jesus. As a result, they are being transformed into the image of Jesus and they love the lost like Jesus loves them. A love for the lost compels the Church and all its members to tell others about Jesus and passionately invite everyone to repent of sins, trust in Jesus, and follow Him as they do.
  - Evangelism can be a program in the church whereby on a certain day of the week the members gather to pray and then evangelize in their community. Evangelism can also be a program whereby the church works to evangelize and start a new church in another community. Healthy churches will do evangelism together as a group or in small groups. We see the early Christians in the Bible doing this in **Acts 2:14-41**. When we all work together to do evangelism we can be very effective.
  - However, evangelism should not be limited to a church program. A healthy church has members who are all doing evangelism in their daily lives as well. Jesus preached to large groups but He also evangelized to individuals as well while He was doing other things (**John 4:1-32**). The members of a healthy church will live righteous lives to gain the attention of the lost people around them and then seek opportunities to tell others about the gospel of Jesus (**Matthew 5:13-16; 2 Corinthians 5:11**).
1. Does your church have an evangelism program for your community?
  2. Do your church members evangelize in their daily lives on their own and then bring new people to church?
  3. When was the last time you shared the gospel or led someone to salvation?



## Biblical Ordinances

- A healthy church performs the two ordinances that Jesus instituted for the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism was instituted in **Matthew 28:19-20**. Baptism is only for those who have trusted in Jesus according to the gospel message and have given credible evidence of that faith (**Acts 2:41**). Salvation is by grace through faith and Baptism is an outward testimony of the inward change that salvation brings.
  - The word "baptism" means immersion. Baptism through immersion symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It also testifies that we have trusted in the Jesus, we have died to our sinful life, and we have been raised to walk in our new life with Christ (**Romans 6:4**). Christian baptism is done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as Jesus commanded. Finally, it is through baptism that we are visibly admitted into the body of Christ and therefore the church (**1 Corinthians 12:13**).
  - A healthy church celebrates the Lord's Supper regularly. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in (**Luke 22:19-20**). The bread we eat represents the body of Jesus which was broken on the cross for us and the fruit of the vine represents the blood that Jesus shed for us on the cross.
  - The Lord's Supper is another way of outwardly testifying to our faith in Jesus as our savior and Lord. This testimony is why the Lord's Supper is for members who have been baptized and show credible evidence of their salvation and faith in Jesus. Only a true believer can truly testify of salvation in Jesus. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper together we remember the death of Jesus, we testify of the gospel, and we anticipate His return (**1 Corinthians 11:26**).
1. Does your church baptize new Christians by immersing them in water?
  2. Does your church baptize new Christians quickly or do you wait a long time?
  3. Does your church celebrate the Lord's Supper? If so, how often do you celebrate it?



## Biblical Membership

- A healthy church knows that only born again, baptized, believers can be a member of the church (**Acts 2:41; 47**). The church is a body of believers that reflects the image of God. Therefore, only true believers can be added to the church membership list. The church in the Bible considered someone added as a member when they were saved and baptized.
  - A healthy church also knows that non-Christians and people who act like them should not be allowed to be members of the church (**2 Corinthians 6:14-18**). The Bible teaches that the church is the body of Christ and that only Christians are a part of the body of Christ (**Romans 12:4-5**).
  - Based on these truths, a healthy church takes the membership list seriously. Every member has given testimony of their salvation, has received biblical baptism, and is following Jesus. A healthy church welcomes unbelievers into the church for programs but will not allow them to receive membership until they have repented of sin, trusted in Jesus alone, and have been baptized.
  - These matters are serious because if we say a person is a member of our church we are saying we believe that person is a Christian. We are saying that person believes and lives the way our church believes. If a person does not live according to the Christian faith, then we have no proof of their salvation and should not give membership to them. A healthy church tries to match their membership list with the names written in the Lamb's Book of Life (**Revelation 20:12**). To allow unbelievers to be members confuses the church members and the people outside of the church.
  - A healthy church teaches that every member is responsible to each other and that the church is responsible for each member. This means that the members of a healthy church believe they are responsible to love, encourage, forgive, serve, and admonish one another (**Ephesians 4:25-5:21**). When a church member neglects his or her responsibilities to the other members it confuses the members and the outsiders as to what it means to be a Christian or a church member. Therefore, the healthy church is serious about what membership is and teaching the members to serve in the body of Christ.
1. How many people attend your church on Sunday morning?
  2. How many of those show fruit that they are saved?
  3. How many of those Christians have been baptized? This is your membership number.
  4. How does someone become a member of your church?
  5. Does your church allow non-members to teach, preach, pray, lead in singing, or vote?



## Biblical Accountability, Discipline, and Restoration

- A healthy church takes seriously the task of reflecting God's holy image to the world. A church is made up of Christians who are working to follow Jesus and reflect the holy image of God in their daily lives. A healthy church knows that we all fall short of reflecting the glory of God and that we need each other to help us when we sin. This is why a healthy church will hold the members accountable when a member has a habit of sin. When the church works together to live holy lives everyone is improved and matured (**Proverbs 27:17; James 5:16**).
  - Pastors and elders in a healthy church will keep watch over the spiritual life of church members (**Hebrews 13:17**). When sin comes in the elders and pastors must teach, correct, and rebuke as necessary (**2 Timothy 4:2**). However, accountability and correction must always come with patience and love. Restoration is not about tearing people down but building them up in Christ so that others will see the holiness of God in us and in our church.
  - Restoration is when a church member helps another church member see their sin. However, if the one who sinned refuses to repent, then the church must also use discipline. When a healthy church has a member who claims to be a Christian but is living in serious sin without repenting, they will remove this person as a member and not allow that person to take the Lord's Supper (**Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5**). A church cannot reflect the holiness of God if it allows members to live in serious sin. Their evangelism and ministries will be useless.
  - A healthy church will hold the members accountable to live according to the teachings of Jesus and will discipline members who refuse to repent of serious sin when it is shown to them. When a healthy church uses accountability and discipline it shows love to the member being disciplined because we want to help that person come back to Jesus. Discipline shows love to the other members of the church as it reminds them of the dangers of sin. It shows love for the holy image of God as we keep the church righteous and therefore have a better witness to the community around us.
1. Does your church have a plan for when a member commits a serious sin?
  2. What will your church do if a member commits a sexual sin or uses witchcraft?



## Biblical Discipleship

- A healthy church is committed to discipleship. Discipleship is when the members of a healthy church help one another to mature in their faith in Jesus and obedience to His teachings (**Matthew 18:19-20**). This means that each member is growing in faith and obedience and is helping other members grow too, so that every part of the body of Christ is living and growing together (**Ephesians 4:15-16**).
- A healthy church also has all members sharing everything they learn with someone else in their life (**2 Timothy 2:2**). In this way, making disciples is not a program of the church. In a healthy church, making disciples is the lifestyle of every member.
- You can know that the church is healthy and serious about discipleship if the members of the church are showing increasing signs of a transformed heart (**Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17**), a transformed mind (**Colossians 3:1-10; Romans 12:2**), a transformed affection (**Psalm 63:1-10; Matthew 6:33**), a transformed will (**John 14:15-21; James 1:22-25**), transformed relationships (**Romans 12:3-21; Mark 10:43-45**), and a transformed purpose (**Luke 24:45-53; Acts 20:24**).
- A discipleship group does more than just study the Bible. They pray for one another, study together, and encourage each other to obey and share what they have learned with people outside the church.
  1. How does your church make disciples?
  2. Does your church have discipleship groups?
  3. Are your discipleship groups growing with new members? Why not? If the members are sharing what they learn, then the group should grow.
  4. Are the members of your church growing in faith, knowledge, maturity, and righteousness? If your church members are not becoming more mature, then maybe you should improve the discipleship plan in your church.



## Biblical Leadership

- A healthy church will have biblical leadership to serve the church. The first form of leadership we see in the New Testament is the work of pastor, elder, or overseer. Pastor, elder, and overseer are three words for the same office or position in the church. The different titles reflect the different duties of that office. The title “overseer” means that the pastor watches over all the work of the church. The title “elder” means that the pastor has life experience in following Jesus and sets a good example for the members. The title “pastor” means that the pastor guides the members and corrects the members according to the Bible through preaching, teaching, and counseling.
  - The main work of the pastor, elder, or overseer is praying, studying the Bible, and teaching it to the members so that they are trained to do the work of God in their lives (**Acts 6:4**). His work is primarily spiritual but he can also lead in other areas too.
  - Because the work of the pastor, elder, or overseer is a very important spiritual work in the church, a healthy church takes seriously the task of choosing who will do that work. The New Testament gives qualifications for pastors, elders, and overseers (**1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9**). Two of those qualifications are that they be men who are able to teach.
  - The second form of leadership the New Testament teaches about is the work of deacons. Deacons are responsible for the practical details of the church such as administration, maintenance, and the care of church members with physical needs. The Bible also tells us about their qualifications as well (**1 Timothy 3:8-13**). Deacons help the church and pastor by doing work in the church that allows the pastors to devote more time to prayer and teaching (**Acts 6:4**). It is not the duty of deacons to preach or teach since the ability to teach is not listed in their qualifications. However, if a deacon has this ability, he is free to teach as the pastor gives him opportunity.
1. Who is the leadership of your church?
  2. Does your church use words like “chairman,” “secretary,” or “treasurer,” instead of pastor, elder, and deacons?
  3. Does your church have pastors and elders for preaching, teaching, and caring for the spiritual needs of the church?
  4. Does your church have deacons for helping to run and maintain the work of the church?





## Biblical Fellowship

- A healthy church is known for the fellowship that the members have with each other. In **John 17:22-23** Jesus prayed that His followers, Christians, would be unified with Him and with each other. This unity and fellowship means the members know each other well enough to be fruitfully involved in the lives of the other members. They know the names and struggles of each other so that they can help one another (**Galatians 6:2**).
  - This is seen and expressed as the members of a healthy church love each other (**Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 1:22**), encourage each other and build each other up in the Lord so that they all grow together (**1 Thessalonians 5:11**).
  - They also help each other mature in the faith by teaching each other (**Hebrews 3:13**), admonishing each other (**Colossians 3:16**), and stirring each other to good works (**Hebrews 10:24**).
  - Fellowship also means the members live in harmony with each other (**Romans 12:16**), show kindness and forgive one another (**Ephesians 4:32**), welcome one another (**Romans 15:7**), help each other by caring for each other (**1 Peter 4:9**), and serving each other (**Galatians 5:13**).
1. Does the community know your church as a church that loves its members and care for one another?
  2. Do your church members relate to each other outside of the church programs?
  3. Do you feel that you and your members know each other well?
  4. Do you feel that you and your members are fruitfully involved in the lives of one another?



## Biblical Worship

- A healthy church worships God in a way that is acceptable to Him according to the Bible. Only true Christians can truly worship God because worship is an expression of our love for God who gave us salvation through Jesus (**1 John 2:15**). Acceptable worship is done with reverence, awe (**Hebrews 12:28**), and joy (**Psalms 28:7**). Singing in the church should always be for the glory of God and not for the praise of people for our good singing.
  - Worship should include singing but the content and messages of the songs must be filled with biblical truth to be acceptable and beneficial to the members (**Colossians 3:16**).
  - Worship should also include the public reading of the Bible (**1 Timothy 4:13**), testimonies of God's people (**Psalms 22:22; Psalm 66:16**), and prayer (**Acts 2:42**). Fasting can also be included when appropriate and needed (**Acts 13:2-3**). The goal of worship is always to glorify the Lord. Worship should never be used to gain attention for yourself (**Jeremiah 9:23-24; Luke 18:11-14**).
1. Are those who lead worship in your church truly Christian?
  2. Are the songs you sing full of biblical truth?
  3. Do your worship services include reading the Bible together?
  4. Do your worship services allow time for testimonies of God's grace?
  5. Do your worship services include times of prayer?
  6. Do those leading your worship service glorify God or themselves?



## Biblical Prayer

- A healthy church is full of members who pray biblically alone in private and corporately together. Jesus taught his disciples to pray in **Matthew 6:9-12**). Through Jesus' prayer we learn that Biblical prayer involves worshipping God (**Matthew 6:9**), submitting to God's plan and praying for God's will to be accomplished (**Matthew 6:10**), asking for daily needs (**Matthew 6:11**), confessing sins asking for forgiveness (**Matthew 6:12**), and asking for help to grow in righteousness (**Matthew 6:12**).
- We learn in other places of the Bible that pray can include thanking God (**Philippians 4:6**), and interceding for others (**Ephesians 6:17-18**)
- Biblical prayer also means praying in the right way. Prayer should be done in faith (**James 1:5-6**). Prayers should be made in Jesus name (**1 John 5:14-15**), according to the will of God (**Matthew 6:10; Luke 22:42**).
- Prayer should also be for the glory of God (**1 Kings 18:36-37**). 1 Kings 18 also shows us the way pagans pray all at once with shouting, vain repetition, and running around. We also learn in 1 Kings 18 that Elijah's prayer was powerful because he prayed with faith in the true God, with humility, in the will of God, and for the glory of God.
- A healthy church is unified when they pray. They do not shout at God or command God because they remember that God is the King and we are the servants. God is the Father and we are the children. A healthy church prays with humility and respect to God. Also, a healthy church has order when they pray (**1 Corinthians 14:33**). This means only one person praying aloud at a time so that all the members and guests can benefit from hearing the prayers of one another.
  1. Are the prayers in your church prayed to God with faith in Jesus?
  2. Are the prayers in your church prayed with respect, humility, and in the will of God?
  3. Are the prayers in your church prayed with shouting, anger, and to Satan? Remember, we should not pray like pagans.
  4. Do your members pray Biblically at home too?



## Biblical Giving

- A healthy church gives biblically. This means the members give generously and with joy (**2 Corinthians 9:6-15**). Giving to God through money or harvest is an exercise of faith. Those with faith in God give generously and joyfully because they do not trust in money or harvest. They trust in God alone. Those who do not give with generosity or joy show that they love and trust money or food more than God.
- A healthy church also uses the offerings of the church in the right way according to the Bible. They use some of the offering to support their pastors (**1 Corinthians 9:14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18**), to help with the expenses of the church, to help people in need (**Acts 4:33-35; Acts 11:29; Galatians 2:10**), and to spread the gospel around the world (**Romans 10:14-15; Acts 13:2-3**).
- A healthy church should also be self-sustaining. This means that the church does not depend on the financial support of others. A healthy church manages to cover its own expenses and perform its own ministries without help from outsiders (**Galatians 6:4-5**).
  1. Do your church members give their money generously and happily?
  2. Do your offerings reflect the financial income of the church members?
  3. Does your church use the offerings to obey the Bible or just to construct the building?
  4. Is your church trusting God to provide through your members or are you begging outsiders to help your church?



## Biblical Mission

- A healthy church is involved in the biblical mission of spreading the gospel locally and internationally (**Acts 1:8**). As the church reflects the image of God it must also proclaim the message of the gospel. Jesus commanded Christians to make disciples in all nations. First, that includes making disciples where you live. A healthy church is full of members who show the love of Jesus to those around them and evangelize to them. Then the church works together to disciple the new believers (**Matthew 28-19-20**).
  - A healthy church also works together to show the love of Jesus and spread the gospel to other nations. This can be done by working with refugees, sending missionaries, or supporting an organization that can send missionaries like our Baptist Fellowship of Zambia or our Baptist Theological Seminary.
  - We cannot just choose one area of missions. We must work in our villages and in other places at the same time.
1. Is your church sharing the gospel in your community?
  2. Is your church helping start a church in a community near you?
  3. Is your church helping to send missionaries or give money to the seminary?