

Healthy Church Evaluation

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 become unhealthy. We 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 work to improve.

What can happen to the church members if a church follows the Bible and grows in healthiness?



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. Therefore, the first characteristic of a healthy church is a church that is serious about teaching and preaching God's thoughts instead of the thoughts of people. 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. When a church believes these things, it will make sure that every preacher and teacher teaches the Bible correctly. This means that when someone teaches or preaches in the church they will read a particular passage, explain what it means, and then help the church learn how to live according to the truths found in the verses. If a church allows someone to teach and preach their own thoughts, the people will be conformed to that person instead of God (**2 John 9-11**) and that is bad. The church should be growing in the image of God and that requires learning the truth of God in the Bible. (**Psalm 119:1-176; 2 Timothy 2:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; Acts 6:4**)



Biblical Evangelism

A healthy church is a church where all the members are evangelizing to the people outside of the church. 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**).



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 good evidence of that faith through their testimony and life (**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 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**).



Biblical Membership

A healthy church knows that only baptized Christians 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. A healthy church tries to match their membership list with the names written in the Lamb's Book of Life (**Revelation 20:12**).



Biblical Accountability and Discipline

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. This is why a healthy church will hold the members accountable when fall back into a life 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 with love and patience (**2 Timothy 4:2**). Accountability 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. Accountability 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. 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. 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.



Biblical Discipleship

A healthy church is committed to discipleship. Discipleship is when the members of a church help one another 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**). 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 (**Psalms 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 Bible study 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.



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 main work of the pastor is praying, studying the Bible, and teaching it to the members so that they are trained to do the work of God also (**Acts 6:4**). Their work is primarily spiritual but they can also lead in other areas too. A healthy church will take 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**).



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. This is seen and expressed as the members of a healthy church love each other, encourage each other, and build each other up in the Lord so that they all grow together. Fellowship also means the members help each other by caring for each other, serving each other, and bearing each other's burdens. (**Romans 12:10; Romans 12:16; 1 Peter 3:8; Romans 15:7; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:24; 1 Peter 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22**)



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 (**1 John 2:15**). Therefore, only baptized members can be in the choir. Acceptable worship is done with reverence, awe (**Hebrews 12:28**), and joy (**Psalms 28:7**). 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**).



Biblical Prayer

A healthy church is full of members who pray biblically in private and corporately together. Biblical prayer involves worshipping God (**Matthew 6:9**), confessing sins (**Matthew 6:12**), thanking God (**Philippians 4:6**), interceding for others (**Ephesians 6:17-18**), and asking God for their own needs (**Matthew 6:11**). 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**), for the glory of God (**1 Kings 18:36-37**). Biblical prayer does not bring confusion and noise in the church.



Biblical Giving

A healthy church gives biblically. This means the members generously and happily give (**2 Corinthians 9:6-7**) 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.



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. (**Matthew 28:19-20**). A healthy church 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 must work in our villages and in other places at the same time.

Healthy

Church

