

Choosing the right church is work

By Brad Bryant

FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

“Which church should I join?” “Is church important?” The answers depend on who you talk to!

For some faiths, merely “choosing” to be part of “their group” is an “instant ticket” into heaven — everyone else is “wrong.”

For others, church is a “social club,” to build a circle of friends, and “go places.”

For others, church is a “historical” place, focused on ancient people and texts.

For me, “church” is family — people, called to represent the best that Jesus’ life shows us about relation-

ships. But better than our “biological family,” a church family is made up of people who have chosen to be part of that family.

Like a physical family, every church member has strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. No one in the “church” has all of the answers, or the “secret handshake” that guarantees good choices and eternal bliss — not even the pastor. Ministers are human too, and are fellow seekers, also following that path toward God’s presence.

So as you face these questions, it’s important to do some serious “shopping.” Visit many. Learn what they teach; ask questions directly. Compare the answers with the Scriptures, and

with knowledge that you’re gaining. But most importantly, whether you believe in God or not, pray for guidance, and expect God to answer you. God knows who can best help you to grow spiritually. Let him guide you.

Regardless of what you heard “growing up,” your Judgment Day question on the “final exam” will not be “which church did you join?” Judgment of your earthly life will be focused on your choices, what you learned, how you treated people, and what you did with the eternal truths that you found during your life. Did you use those truths to improve your ability to serve others for God?

Investigate today’s avail-

able churches. Look for ones that put Jesus Christ at the center. Jesus is the only source of hope, help, healing and peace. His question to you will be more like: “How did you treat my people?”

If you don’t have a relationship with the living God, please choose to begin that journey toward him. Remember: God loves you unconditionally, and wants you to find and hear him. Search until you find a church family that helps you meet the “living, loving God,” who knows you personally, and wants to be invited into your daily life.

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