

FROM THE PULPIT

# A little help to go 'shopping' for a church

**By Brad Bryant**  
FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

**D**uring a recent drive from Normal to Indianapolis, while pondering this article, God impressed on my heart that there are many folks in our area who need a church home but don't know what to look for as they try to choose from the many options.

Given a question like "How many churches are in your town?" the "right" answer is one: the church of Jesus Christ. However, the many "flavors" of

Christ-followers can make choosing a church difficult. How would God choose?

If you're feeling God's Spirit nudging you to find a church family to help fill the "spiritual void" in your life, I invite you to use this list as a starting point in your church shopping.

These items are not in any particular order, but look for a church that:

- ▶ Is living God's unconditional love for all people. If they act and speak of "us" vs. "them," be careful!
- ▶ Is open to all people, but es-

pecially for sinners — people who are separated from God. If only the "pure" can enter, be careful.

▶ Puts Jesus at the center of all it does. If the building, the pastor or the budget get the attention, be careful.

▶ Provides opportunity and encourages people to ask hard questions, and to continue to find God's truth unfolding before them. If they teach a God that is bound by a "box" or a "book," or they provide the "one and only answer," be careful.

▶ Shares its love like a large family ... where you're missed if you don't show up, and people care enough to check in on you.

▶ Offers as many sacraments as possible. Sacraments are God's "doorways" into his presence. Details about several can be found here:

<http://bit.ly/8Sacraments>

▶ Uses Scripture in a healthy manner — not as a weapon to beat people, but as a guide to encourage, uplift and heal them.

▶ Expects to encounter God's Holy Spirit in action, both pri-

vately and as a church body.

▶ Is part of a larger body of believers, where that sense of "family" can be found in places beyond your home congregation.

Remember: God loves you, and wants you to find him. Find a church family that helps you meet the "living, loving God," who knows you personally, and wants to be your "partner" now, in this life!

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