
Choosing a Church

This is primarily an exercise in theological thinking, not pastoral practice, although the need to advise about church will arise often during MTS. The ability to assess churches theologically is basic to pastoral care of the flock.

Exercise

Prepare a workshop on what advice to give people on choosing a church.

Aims

1. To learn to assess churches and ministries from the viewpoint of theology
2. To see the pastoral and gospel implications of true and false teaching
3. To develop the attitude and skills of critical love - exposing the error of false teachers while loving them and our flock and seeking the salvation of all
4. To learn to use the Bible in discerning between gospel essentials and non-essentials in our theological judgments
5. To cultivate an interest in historical theology and why churches teach what they do

Apprentices

1. Work out the various scenarios for people who are choosing a church, considering both good and bad motivations, eg. the new Christian, new place of residence, the church hopper, relationship breakdown, new pastor, new theological trends in church, longevity, increasing theological discernment.
2. Study key New Testament books and passages which establish the fundamental doctrines of a faithful Church, eg. Galatians, Colossians, 1 John, 2 John.
3. Prepare a workshop on this topic.

Trainers

- Critique the workshop

Resources

- Have Evangelicals Lost Their Way?, Phillip Jensen and Tony Payne, (Matthias Media: 1991)
- Saving the Heart: What is an Evangelical?, Mark Thompson (Matthias Media: 1995)
- Evangelicalism Divided, Iain Murray (Banner of Truth: 2000)
- In Understanding be Men, T.C. Hammond (IVP: 1968)