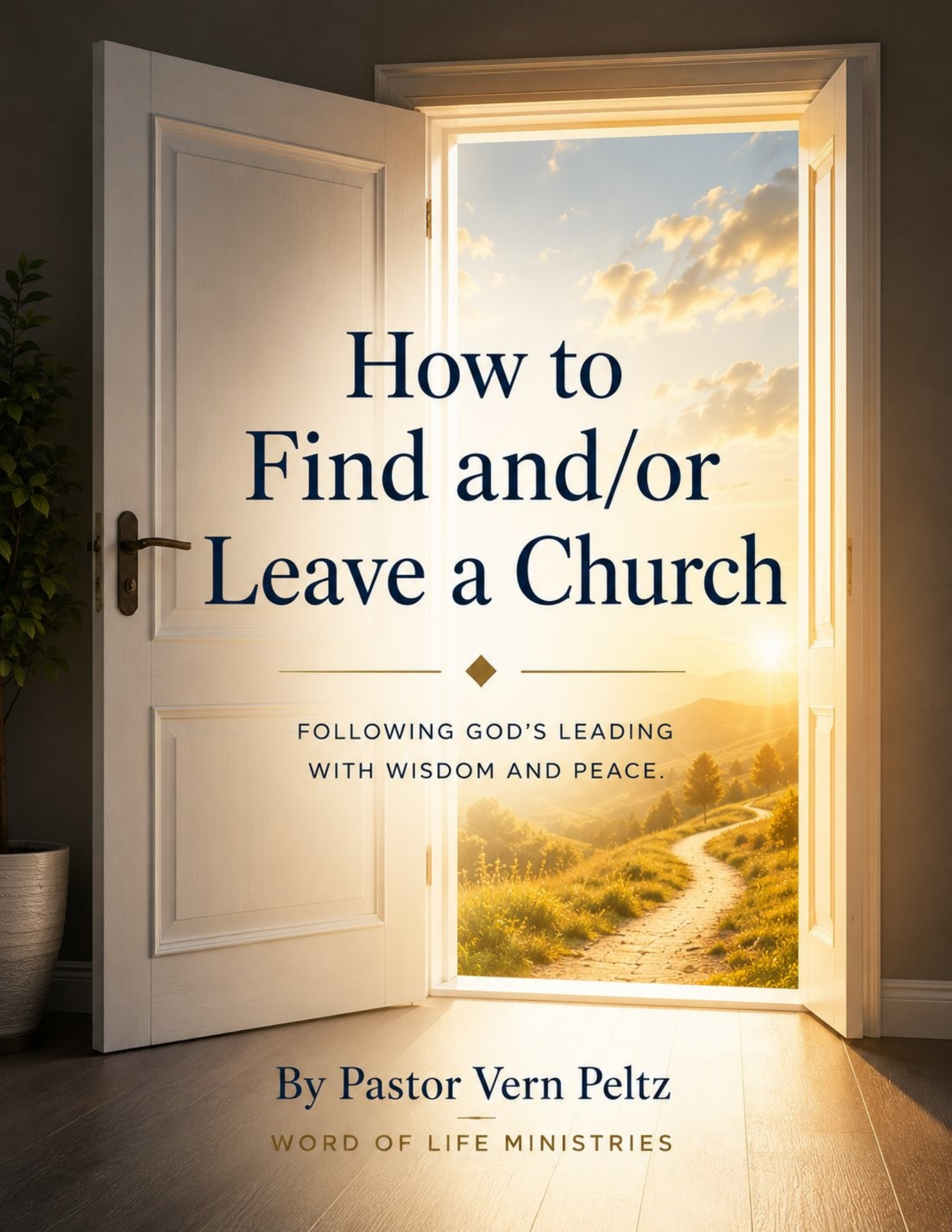


An open white door with a brass handle is set against a dark interior wall. To the left of the door is a potted plant. The door is open, revealing a bright, sunlit landscape. A winding path leads through a grassy field towards distant hills under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The text "How to Find and/or Leave a Church" is centered over the door and the landscape.

How to Find and/or Leave a Church

FOLLOWING GOD'S LEADING
WITH WISDOM AND PEACE.

By Pastor Vern Peltz

WORD OF LIFE MINISTRIES

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Word of Life Ministries

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How To Find A Church

By Pastor Vern Peltz

Even though this is a huge issue that many people deal with in their lifetime, it is an area that remains unaddressed by the church. At Word of Life, we make it a goal to openly address any question, problem, or situation that may come up in life. Below is a list of points that I feel need to be looked for to make these kinds of decisions.

A. Word and Prayer

1. WE WILL NEED TO HEAR FROM GOD TO MAKE THIS DECISION. (In reality, we need to hear from God to make any decision correctly) Without being in the Word and Prayer, WE WILL NOT HEAR GOD. If we don't hear God's voice and get his direction, we are practically guaranteed we'll make the wrong decision.
2. We must be led by the Spirit. Not Physical Sense and Reasoning. (I Cor. 2:10-16)

B. Be Honest With Yourself, and Follow Your Peace

1. The most accurate way to hear God is via our inner peace. God will lead us by giving us peace, or taking our peace away about a church or situation.
2. Bind up any false peace, and loose the true peace of God in you. Follow your peace.
3. We must be honest and sincere in this process. If we just want our own way, we will get into a false/deceptive peace. For a time, the decision will literally feel peaceful to us, even though it is not of God. (John 14:27)
4. Isa. 9:6b-7a; John 14:15-19, 25-28.

C. Anointing and Presence of the Spirit

1. Is the Spirit of God free to flow and move? (Luke 4:18-19)
2. Is the Face of God (Presence of God and the Spirit) seen in the services? (Ex. 33:12-23; I Cor. 4:6; II Cor. 3:17)

D. What Flow/Company do we want to be in?

1. This is really a poor question, but it needs to be addressed because of human nature. The ungodly mind thinks that God is divided. It thinks that there are many different ways to choose from, when serving God. In reality God has only one way to serve him to receive his best. That way is the Scriptural Way. All the other flavors and avenues of how to serve God ARE MAN MADE. That is why portions of the Word are always left out in the other approaches of living for God. And that's why when we do it those ways, we NEVER REALLY live in the Blessing, or see the Supernatural operate.

2. There is really ONE Church, ONE Bride of Christ, ONE Correct Way of Living and Doing, Etc. (Eph. 4:1-6) In my understanding of the Word, we're to find a church that stays as scripturally accurate as possible. THERE WE'LL FIND GOD. The further away from scripture a church is, THE LESS WE FIND GOD THERE.

E. Is The Authority of the Word Supreme?

1. If the Word is not the Supreme standard we live by, then it becomes the traditions of man, or what we typically refer to as Religion or Religious Thinking. (Mark 7:13)
2. The Word is the Rule and Guide we measure EVERYTHING against. (I John 1:1-3; II Pet. 1:3-4; II Tim. 3:16-17)

F. Will I Be Fed and Matured?

1. The younger or immature we are in the Lord, the more important this point is.
2. There is a difference between being comfortable, complacent, everything is relatively easy, not much is being presented that will require growth and change on our part; Vs. being confronted with truth, choices needing to be made, life-styles needing to be looked at and changed, habits broken, attitudes re-arranged, etc.

One approach gives us the feeling of trying to be Godly, but in reality is powerless. (II Tim. 3:5)
The other approach allows the Spirit to move, flow, convict and convince which produces suffering, perseverance, and ultimately — maturity. (Rom. 5:1-5; II Pet. 1:3-9; James 1:4)
3. Maturity is never easy or fun. It forces us to change in every area of our life. That is usually painful to the soul and causes suffering. But it is one of the main reasons for the 5-fold ministry in the church. (John 21:15-17; Eph. 4:7-16)
4. To be fed and matured is to cause us to grow. (Ps. 23:1-3)

G. Will I Be Pastored?

1. Another word used to try to explain 'Pastor' in scripture is 'Overseer'. (I Pet. 5:2) An Overseer is someone who 'Over Sees' someone or something. In our society, the concept of Pastor or Overseer is not understood anymore. We're too far removed from the ranching/sheep-herding roots the picture is drawn from.
2. To be pastored is more than attending a church, hearing a message, and shaking the person's hand and chatting occasionally. The original picture of a shepherd is someone who was continually active in the lives of the sheep. He lived with them, led them, groomed them, fed them, protected them, nurtured them, took care of them when they were sick, etc. To apply that in even a loose way, to pastor/oversee a person requires co-operation from two people: The Pastor, and the Person.
3. Is the pastor willing and able to be involved in our life enough to help guide us? And secondly, is the person willing and open enough to reveal what is really going on in their life, so they can be guided? The combination produces responsibility, accountability, co-operation, maturity, etc. It produces Pastoring and Laity.
4. I Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:17; Titus 1:5-9.

H. Will I be able to get involved and minister?

1. One of the greatest products that is to come from a maturing Christian is Ministry. It is one of the things that the Lord commanded us to do. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18)
2. It is true that ministry takes place outside the church. But it is also true that it is always to be tied to a church body. There are many people in our society who don't have much use for a church body any longer. However, scripturally it is the hub of all spiritual activity. And all spiritual activity is to be connected to and revolve around the church and body in some manner. All ministry should lead back to a church body. That's the place designated where true growth in the individual will take place. It's also supposed to be the center of tapping the supernatural. (Eph. 4:7-16; Matt. 18:18-20; Acts 2:42-47; 4:29-31; Heb. 10:19-25)

I. Has God told me to go to this certain church?

1. A good question to ask ourselves is: Why am I going to this church? The most correct answer is that God told me to go here. Too often it revolves around other reasons; many of them can be good — but the most correct one is that we're there because we were led by God to be there. (John 15:1-8)

Remember: We're much more successful as a Christian if we don't pray that God bless what we want or what we're planning. But rather, we pray that we find what he's planning and blessing, and start doing it. That guarantees prosperity in our lives.

2. Everything in life is supposed to be led by the Spirit. He shows us what God wants. Being led by the Spirit is a sign of maturity. (Matt. 6:10; John 5:17, 19; 8:38; 12:49; Rom. 8:1-17)
3. If we are recently saved, stay with the spiritual parents who helped get you saved. Don't even consider looking for another church until you've grown up enough spiritually to be hearing God's voice and able to follow him. You may spiritually outgrow the church that led you to the Lord. But, until you've outgrown it, (which may or may not ever happen) stay with the people who parented you into the kingdom, and where you were born-again.

J. Is The Lord Jesus Christ there and active?

1. "Lord" — Gr. Def. — "Master, Possessor, Owner, Controller, One with Servants"
 - a. Is Jesus truly being presented as the one who needs to be the "Lord" over our lives?
 - b. In All Areas of Our Lives?
2. "Jesus" — Gr. Def. — "Savior, Salvation"
 - a. Is Jesus being presented as the only "Savior" for mankind.
 - b. How deep is that "Salvation" being presented. True "Salvation" must encourage us to strive for: ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. NO LIMITS ON WHAT GOD CAN DO.
3. "Christ" — Gr. Def. — "Messiah; The Anointed One and His Anointing"
 - a. Is the Anointing present and active in the service?
 - b. Does the presence of God manifest in the services?
 - c. Is the Holy Spirit and his Gifts allowed to manifest in the church and services?
 - d. Without the "Anointing", everything else is in vain. It is the "Burden Removing" and "Yoke Destroying" power of God.

K. For those who feel they're being sent to a church or place to minister and be an influence

1. It is possible for God to tell you to go to a church where C, E, F, G, J (above) are very weak or missing completely. When that happens, you are there more to minister than to be ministered to.
2. If this happens, there are some important things to consider:
 - a. Make sure you REALLY heard God. This assignment may turn out very well, but it also may have a difficult ending. (Many examples in scripture)
 - b. Am I spiritually strong enough to do this? (Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 10:23-11:1) You'll likely be encouraging a message or flow of the Spirit that is currently not there, but God wants to get it there. This process of being an influence will likely cause you a lot of grief, disappointment, persecution, rejection by others, etc. — even if it succeeds. If it doesn't succeed, it can be devastating to the person.
 - c. Are you willing to become like them in areas to be an influence on them? (I Cor. 9:19-23) If you have a family, will this spiritually destroy your children?

Be Sure You've Heard God. If this is God, everything will turn out fine.

d. Can you walk your faith/live your Christian life in a victorious and overcoming manner — ALL ALONE — BY YOURSELF — WITH LITTLE TO NO SUPPORT FROM OTHERS? (II Tim. 2:15; 4:9-10; 14-18) YOU MUST BE MATURE ENOUGH THAT YOU CAN FEED YOURSELF SPIRITUALLY, AND NOT NEED TO BE GOING TO OTHERS TO BE FED OR REVIVED SPIRITUALLY. If you aren't that mature yet, and you can't walk this thing by yourself, God is not asking you to do this! God will not sacrifice you for something you can do for him. He loves you more than your ministry.

When you are sent to a church to minister to them or be an influence to them, you must do just that — GET INVOLVED AND MINISTER/INFLUENCE. YOUR HEART MUST BE IN THIS FOR THE PEOPLE — NOT FOR YOURSELF IN ANY WAY.

This will not be a part time job, and the rest of the time you spend at a different church, or with different believers. This Is Now Your Assignment. If the people get the feeling you are only partially there, and you are partially (or mostly) other places — you will have no ministry or influence whatsoever. They'll realize your hypocrisy and your influence and ministry will be reduced to little or nothing.

e. Count The Cost. This will cost you. One of the definitions for the word 'ministry' is "to serve another at your own expense". Don't start something you can't or aren't willing to finish. That will do more harm than good. (Luke 14:25-35)

***** Scripturally, WE ARE NOT TO PICK A CHURCH BASED ON WHAT IT HAS TO OFFER ME!!! That makes the whole decision very selfish. It's an Ungodly mindset.**

1. The programs they have or don't have are not the reasons to pick a church.
2. The kind of praise and worship is not the reason to pick a church.
3. Whether it is good preaching or not, is not the reason.
4. Whether we're comfortable or not, is not the reason to pick a church.
5. The kind of building/facility is not the reason.
6. How they pray, flow in the Spirit, etc. are not reasons either.

In our self-driven American culture, we need to pay attention so that we don't make this decision on a selfish basis.

The reasons to go to a church are listed above.

How To Leave A Church

This is a subject that I have never heard addressed. I think there are a number of reasons:

- We like to believe that no one will ever leave.
- It is typically a very painful thing. (Even when you do it the right way)
- We don't want anyone to leave, so we won't Bless them to do so.
- We've lost sight of the Kingdom of God Principle. (God's work is bigger than our church)
- We don't like confrontation.
- We don't want to be challenged on what we believe.
- Etc.

Yet it is a very real reality that all of us face. At some point — either someone will be leaving us, or we are the ones who will be leaving.

THERE ARE RIGHT WAYS AND WRONG WAYS OF LEAVING A CHURCH. Sad to say, most of the time it is done the wrong way and for the wrong reasons. It's a huge reason the church in America is so powerless, and lacking in the supernatural. There are so many bad attitudes, feelings, so much unforgiveness and bitterness, etc. locked up in the people who make up the church — IT IS LITERALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD TO MOVE AMONG US!!! Let's look at some guidelines for the right way to leave a church.

A. The Right Reasons to Leave a Church

1. God is leading you to another church.
 - a. That will happen for one of three reasons:
 - (1) You've matured past the church you are in. They don't believe in or try to practice as 'Full' a gospel as you are being led into. (Faith, Signs, Wonders, Miracles, Casting Out Demons, Healing, Baptism in the Spirit, Speaking in Tongues, Gifts of the Spirit, etc.)
 - (2) You're being moved for ministry reasons.
 - (3) You've gone through the process of Matt. 18:15-17, and no resolution can be found.
2. To my knowledge, there is no other right reason to leave a church. Most of the time we will say that God is leading us to leave. But our reasons are all the wrong reasons. When the reasons are Wrong, God isn't in it!

B. The Wrong Reasons to Leave a Church

1. Anything not mentioned in 'A' above.

C. What does God expect of us when we don't have the right reasons to leave?

1. Stay.

2. Grow and Mature. (Grow Up)
3. Get past any problems or issues.
4. Stay involved and minister.

D. To leave a church correctly, it must originate with God

1. Soulsh reasons (Of the Mind, Will, Intellect, Reasoning, Emotions) are not Godly reasons to leave.
 - a. Things like: Misunderstandings, Hurt Feelings, Offenses, Being Corrected or Disciplined, Differences in Beliefs, Etc.
 - b. These kinds of things are grouped under 'Wisdom That is Not From Above' in James 3:13-16.
 - c. These kinds of problems need to be overcome and worked past. That kind of 'Wisdom is From Above'. (James 3:17-18)
2. The reasons to leave must originate by the Spirit. (I Cor. 2:10-16)

E. Talk to Your Pastor while it's still an infant question or consideration

1. Most of the time, by the time the pastors find out it's even being considered — the person has their mind made up. It's not a discussion. It's an Announcement. THAT'S NOT SCRIPTURAL.
2. Are they our pastor or not? Are they our overseers or not?
 - a. If yes, they should have been included in the process. They're the ones who will answer for what goes on in the church with the people. (I Pet. 5:2-3; Heb. 13:17)
 - b. When they aren't included, (Esp. because of the wrong reasons) the person will be the one answering for how they left. (II Cor. 5:10)
3. Have them agree in prayer with you, and give you input concerning the decision. That's simply allowing them to be a pastor or Overseer.

F. Where is he leading you?

1. Too often we confuse "Running From Something" with "Being Led".
2. When we are Being Led, there is a clear place, location, or goal in mind. God always knows where he is going, and he'll share that with us. (John 15:15-17; 16:12-15)
3. When we are Running From Something, we have no idea where we are going. Our concentration and reasoning is all about what we're leaving and why.

G. Why is he leading us to a specific church or place?

1. This is double checking the fact that we are really being led.
2. God doesn't wander aimlessly. Aimless wandering is the result of sin. (Israelites in the desert for 40 years)
3. When people leave a church and aren't in another one within a very short period of time, they are wandering. (Still trying to find where they're supposed to be) That makes it plain that they

weren't being led TO something, or they'd already be there. They were running FROM something. Now they're looking for some place to be. In reality, they shouldn't give God the credit of having Led them in this kind of situation, because they were likely Running via their own emotion or reasoning, not being Led by the Spirit.

4. The interesting part about this is the attitude that they carry. It always surrounds them. Their thinking. Their opinions. How They See It. They are the center that everything else has to fit into — including God. Now, rather than serving God, they are really serving themselves. They've become their own Idol.

And it typically carries the flavor of: they're looking for something that measures up to their level of spirituality.

a. Things are said like:

It's just so hard to find a good church.

Nobody really wants to serve God anymore.

Nobody has the truth.

There's no church that wants to preach the truth.

They don't have what I'm looking for.

They just don't do things the right way.

Etc. Etc.

b. The real interesting part is that if you ask what the pastor (or the board) said when they met with them about it, you get a lot of excuses, because they never met with anyone in leadership to discuss and try to problem solve the issues. In their mind, it won't do any good anyway.

They feel they've grown past the church and the church isn't doing it correctly, but they don't hold themselves to the same standard of doing it correctly. They didn't do what the scripture says, yet they're spiritually beyond the church. In my opinion, that's the ultimate of hypocrisy.

5. Conclusion: They probably weren't being Led by God at all, or they would have done what the Word says was to be done. They are likely Running from something or someone they don't like.

H. If God is Leading Us and We Know Why He's Leading Us:

1. Then the reasons will agree with our Calling, and Gifting.
2. We will be moving under the direction of the 5-fold Gift we lean towards in ministry. (Eph. 4:7, 11)
3. That Gift works in conjunction with the Calling we have in the Kingdom, and the part of the body that we are to supply. (Eph. 4:16)
4. What realm do we flow in: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher? That is important, because that will be the reason God is moving us in the first place. God is expecting us to flow in our Gift.
5. How is he going to use us? What is the Focus?

I. After Prayer and Discussion, do our Pastors/Overseers agree?

1. The decision isn't based on this. But if they are truly in this for our best, there will be wisdom in what they suggest and advise.
2. If they agree, we need to get the Blessing of the church as we go.
3. If they don't agree, we need to try to get the Blessing of the church as we go.

J. Leaving Must Never Be The Result of:

1. Having been sinned against.
2. Hurt Feelings.
3. Disagreements.
4. Picking up an Offense.
5. Gossip, Slander, Evil Speaking.
6. Unresolved Conflict.
7. Etc.
8. These things are not of God and to make a decision on the basis of them IS NOT OF GOD.

K. Leaving Must Never Be An Impulsive Decision

1. Be Directed. Not Driven.
2. This magnitude of a decision needs to be made together with the leadership over a considerable amount of time. (Eph. 2:11-3:21)
3. If God is really in this move, he knew about it since the creation of the world. (Eph. 1) It's not taking him by surprise. He hasn't forgotten about it. He doesn't need to move quickly now. God is never in a rush. Take your time and make sure it's God.

L. Do We Feel Welcome/Comfortable to Return?

1. Are we still comfortable around the people?
2. Would they welcome our return?
3. Do we avoid:
 - the pastors'/leadership now that we're gone
 - any of the people
4. Are we uncomfortable when we meet them someplace?
5. Would we rather not see them or meet them?
6. If the first two are answered 'No' and 3-5 are answered 'Yes', we left — or are leaving — the wrong way. There are obviously things that are still unresolved.
7. Let's make sure we are clean before God. This decision will affect us and our family more than the church — Esp. if we are doing this the wrong way!!! Be sure you have walked through all the correct scriptural steps. (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-20; Mark 11:25-26)

When we leave a church correctly, it is done in peace, mutual edification, good communication, and agreement. Goodwill remains between the people.

When this doesn't happen, something is being done incorrectly.

WORD OF LIFE NEEDS TO BE A PLACE:

THAT IS SAFE TO COME TO.

THAT IS SAFE TO REMAIN AT.

THAT IS SAFE TO LEAVE.