

# The Church Of God's Choice



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

# The Church Of God's Choice

Learn how to identify and join the one church God established

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## Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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# The Church Of God's Choice

How do you choose which church to join? Maybe you decide to join whatever church is nearest to your house. Maybe you decide to join the same kind of church your parents or grandparents joined. Maybe you decide to join the church that offers the most programs and activities that interest you and your family. Maybe you decide to join a particular church because you like the preacher or because you have a close relationship with some of the members. Maybe you decide to join a church because it has a lot of people who are similar to your age or because it has many who are your children's ages. Maybe you decide to join a church that isn't too strict in doctrine and has services that always leaves you feeling good about yourself.

There are many ways people determine which church they want to belong to. I'm sure that these are only a few of the criteria that are used. Perhaps you have even used one or more of these yourself in choosing a church. Consider, "Why am I a member of the church I currently attend?"

There is a fundamental flaw in all of these methods that are used in choosing a church to be part of. They are all about the individual's choice. They are about *you*! Yes, it is popular teaching today that you should "Attend the church of your choice," "Worship in the church of your choice," and "Join the church of your choice."

But, there is something (or, should I say, "Someone") forgotten in all of this choosing. What about the church of God's choice? Just because a

certain church is the church of *your* choice does not mean that it is the church of *God's* choice! For instance, Isaiah 55:8-9 states, "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.'" Further, Proverbs 14:12 says that "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."

In order to truly serve God, you should be interested in joining the church that is God's choice. And, fortunately, God gives us everything that we need to know to make this determination through the pages of the Bible. During this lesson, we will investigate what the Scriptures teach us about the church of God's choice – so that you can make sure that you are part of this church.

## ***God Only Chose One Church***

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When you are looking to join a church, you may quickly be overwhelmed by all the options that you have. There are thousands of different churches in existence throughout this world. You probably even have many options to pick from within driving distance of your house. Has God chosen all of these churches? Does He *not* care which of these you join? How many churches did God actually choose? Let's consider how God answers these questions in the Bible.

### **God only promised to establish one church**

Before God ever established a church, He made certain prophecies so that people would know to look for it and would know its identification whenever it came into existence. For instance, God prophesied about His church (His kingdom) that would be established in Isaiah 2:1-4; Daniel 2; Joel 2:28-32; and Micah 4:1-5. None of these prophecies indicate any more than one kingdom that would be established.

Listen to what Jesus foretold about the church He would establish. In response to Peter's confession that He (Jesus) is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus said, "And I also say to you that you are

Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Upon this truth that Peter had just confessed, Jesus would build His church – singular. Notice that Jesus said nothing about building any more than just one church.

As the time for Jesus’ church to be established drew closer, Jesus said, “But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:27). Jesus’ church would be established within the lifetime of many who were alive and heard Jesus spoke on that day (not thousands of years later). Then, again you should notice that Jesus only promised a single kingdom, not many different ones for all the people who would follow Him.

### **God only established one church**

Now that we have seen that only one church/kingdom was promised to be established by God, we need to consider how many were actually built. Did God change His mind and decide to establish many different churches, or did He only build one?

Acts chapter 2 marks the day on which the gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed and Jesus’ church came into existence. Everything about this day fulfilled the prophecies that were made in the Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, Peter directly says that the events that were transpiring on that day fulfilled Joel’s prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 (see Acts 2:16-21). Then, as the Jews who were assembled together on that day heard the preaching of Jesus Christ, some asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). They knew that they needed to be saved from their sins, now that they were convicted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Peter responded by commanding them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Verse 41 says, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” And, verse 47 says that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

To what were those who were being saved added? To “their number” – “the church.” So, only one church was established on this day. This one church was composed of those who were being saved by God. Therefore, the saved were in this church – and those who were not being saved were not part of this church.

Surely God could have chosen to establish more than one church on this day if He so desired. But, the fact that He only established one demonstrates something very powerful about God’s choice: There is only one church that meets His standards! And, since the church is composed of the saved, this teaches us that there is only one group of people (one church) that will be saved.

The rest of the Scriptures demonstrate this same truth. For instance, Colossians 1:13 says, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” Those who are true followers of Jesus Christ are only part of one kingdom of Jesus Christ – just as it was prophesied.

Then, in Ephesians 4:4, Paul states that there is “one body.” Ephesians 1:22-23 will prove why this is a significant statement: “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” The church is the body of Jesus Christ – and He only has one body! This means that He only has one church. All other churches are bodies belonging to someone else besides Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures are conclusive in showing us that God has only chosen one church. No more. No less. Only one. Therefore, it is not a man-made doctrine to teach that there is only one church that all the saved are part of. This is God’s teaching. Instead, it is man-made doctrine to claim that man can join whatever church he desires to join and still be saved. God’s word teaches that there is only one universal church that is composed of every person who will be eternally saved (both living and dead). If you are not part of this church, you are not in a saved condition (no matter which man-made church you belong to)! So, you must now determine whether you will be part

of the church of God's choice or part of a church that was started by man.

## ***Identifying The Church Of God's Choice***

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Even after you accept the truth that God only has chosen one church and all those who are saved are part of this church, you should consider how it is that you can identify which church that one is. There are still thousands of churches that are in existence today. So, it will take diligent work for you to discover which one is the right one. Fortunately, God's word serves as a map to lead you into His one true church. If you determine only to listen to it and you rightly interpret and apply what it teaches, you will only find one church – as the Bible will not lead you into any man-made church! So, let's spend some time briefly examining several identification markers of the church of God's choice, as you can read about them in the Bible.

### **The church of God's choice has the right Founder**

Every church and religious organization has a founder. These people were the ones who were instrumental in getting the church going and provided core beliefs that the church adheres to. There are many different founders of many different churches. Although some of these individuals did not intend to begin a new church, their teachings led their followers to establishing such. Please note that it is sometimes difficult to determine who the exact founders for different religious movements are. These are some churches that are typically attributed to particular individuals. For instance, Martin Luther and the Lutheran Church, John Smyth and the Baptist Church, John Knox and the Presbyterian Church, Joseph Smith and The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints, Charles Russell and the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science, etc.

If you have already joined a church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether it

has the same founder as the church of God's choice. Namely, the church of God's choice has Jesus Christ as its one and only Founder. Recall that Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). He is the one who died so that people could be saved. Thus, the church of God was "purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). He is the Head of His body (Ephesians 1:22-23) and all the members of this church only follow after Him.

Acts 4:12 says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." The church of God's choice has the right Founder. Every church that originated with man has some other person or group of people responsible for its founding. Therefore, you should seek to join the church of God's choice that has Jesus Christ as its one and only Founder!

### **The church of God's choice has the right beginning**

Not only does every church or religious organization have a founder, but they all also have a beginning point. Like we saw with the founders, it is not always easy (from a historical perspective) to trace the dates and places of origins of religious movements. Still, here are a sample of approximate years and locations that are typically attributed to various churches and religious organizations. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church began around 606 A.D. in Rome, the Lutheran Church began around 1520 in Germany, the Episcopal Church began around 1534 in England, the Baptist Church began around 1607 in Holland, the Methodist Church began around 1739 in England, etc.

If you have already joined a church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether it has the same beginning as the church of God's choice. Namely, the church of God's choice began in approximately A.D. 33 (during the time of the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection) in Jerusalem. This is both the time and the place that fulfills all of the prophecies made in the Bible so that people would be able to identify it as being the true church. Then, as we have already seen, Acts 2 plainly demonstrates a turning point. Prior to this time, all of the references to God's church was in the future

tense. But, from Acts 2:41 and forward, all references to the church indicate the church as being in existence.

Acts 2:47 says that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The church of God’s choice has the right beginning. Every church that began at a different time began at the wrong time. And, every church that began in a different place began at the wrong place. Therefore, you should seek to join the church of God’s choice that began in Acts 2 at Jerusalem!

### **The church of God’s choice has the right doctrine**

Every church has a set of doctrine that it adheres to and teaches. Some churches adopt doctrines on the basis of the decisions reached by a single individual. For instance, the Pope of the Catholic Church has the ultimate say in determining Catholic doctrine. Some churches adopt doctrines on the basis of what their governing bodies decide. For instance, Jehovah’s Witness’ doctrine is determined by the individuals who compose the Watchtower. Some churches have regular counsels to discuss and vote on any changes to doctrine and policy. For instance, the general conference of the United Methodist Church meets every four years to adopt changes to its creed book (*The Book Of Discipline*) and is the only organization which may speak for the church. It should come as no surprise, then, that every man-made church has adopted man-made doctrines that are contrary to the teachings of God in the Bible – on a wide variety of subjects.

If you have already joined a church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether it has the same doctrine as the church of God’s choice. When God’s church was first established in Acts 2, those who had been added to His church “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (verse 42). Yes, the doctrine a church holds to is important. For instance, those who were part of God’s church were consistently warned throughout the Scriptures that they must be careful to stay away from false teachers with false doctrines (see Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-12; 2 Peter 2:1-3). In fact, 2 John 1:9-11 says that those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ do not have God and must not be

received. Throughout the Scriptures, the church of God’s choice was expected only to hold the doctrines that originate with God (as taught in the pages of Scripture).

2 Timothy 1:13 says, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” The church of God’s choice holds firmly to only the doctrine that God has given in the pages of Scripture. Every man-made church has veered away from the true teachings of the Scriptures at some point, leading its members into error rather than the truth that sets people free from sin (John 8:31-32). Therefore, you should seek to join the church of God’s choice that only follows the doctrines contained in the Bible – no more and no less!

### **The church of God’s choice has the right terms of admission**

Every church has terms of admission. To join any church, you must make your desire known so that you will be added to their number. Although many churches do not believe that being baptized is essential for your salvation, it is quite common for these churches to require a profession of your faith and baptism in order to join *them*. For instance, branches of the Baptist Church and the United Methodist Church typically believe that a person is saved prior to baptism, but require baptism in order to join these churches.

If you joined a church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether its terms of admission were the same (and for the same reasons) as is required by God to be part of the church of His choice. Since God only adds to His church those who are being saved (Acts 2:47), the terms of admission into God’s church are the same as His plan of salvation. While God has sent Jesus to die for all mankind so they could be saved, He has also required mankind to obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). Only those who obey His commands will be added to His church and be saved. His requirements are that you must hear the gospel (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus Christ (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 2:38), confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). Then, after God has added you to His church, He

requires you to remain faithful throughout your life (Revelation 2:10).

Acts 2:38 says, “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” God requires that you obey His commandments in order to have your sins forgiven – and He adds you to the church of His choice. The overwhelming majority of man-made churches today do not teach these same terms of admission (steps of salvation). Instead, many of them teach that you are saved by faith only – and are only baptized to join them. But, though that may be successful in causing you to be added to the church of your choice, you will not be added to the church of God’s choice by doing anything less or more than what God has required. Therefore, you should seek to comply with the terms of admission into God’s church that you can read about in the pages of the Scriptures so that He will add you to His one true church!

## **The church of God’s choice has the right structure**

Every church has an organizational structure. As I mentioned previously, some churches are under the oversight of just one individual. Some churches are under the oversight of a governing body. Some churches have representative counsels that meet on a regular basis. Some churches consider every member to be equal. Some churches distinguish clergy and laity. The Catholic Church has a structure that includes a Pope, Bishops, and Priests. Many other churches have “Pastors” and “Reverends.”

If you joined a church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether it has the same organizational structure as the church of God’s choice. As we have been considering throughout this study, God only has one church in the “universal” sense. This church has no earthly governing body or head. Jesus Christ is the one and only Head of His church (Colossians 1:18). Then, God has designed that those who are members of this one universal church be organized into local churches. These local churches are each self-governing (i.e. no local church has authority over another and there is no governing body larger than the local church). They have been

given a specific work to accomplish, they are to assemble for worship, and they each have their own organizational structures that God has approved.

Philippians 1:1 says, “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” Here is the organizational structure of the local church summarized in one passage. First, there are saints (a reference to every Christian in the church). Second, there are bishops (these are overseers/shepherds of the local church who have met God’s qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9). Third, there are deacons (these are special servants of the local church who have met God’s qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Although local churches are authorized to exist without bishops and deacons, there is no more authority for governance in a local church above these. Yet, the majority of churches today have perverted this God-given organizational structure. Therefore, you should seek to join the church of God’s choice that is organized according to the teachings of the Bible!

## **The church of God’s choice has the right worship**

Every church makes some attempt to worship God during its assemblies. Some churches engage in recitations. Some churches partake of the Lord’s Supper only monthly or yearly. Some churches have women preachers who address the assembly. Some churches have choirs and solos. Some churches use the accompaniment of a mechanical instrument of music (i.e. organ, piano, guitar, drums, etc.). Some churches have dances and theatrical performances.

If you have joined the church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether it attempts to worship God in the same way that God approves. Although the universal church does not meet collectively on earth to engage in worship, the local church does. And, every time God’s people worship Him, their worship is expected to be in “spirit and truth” (John 4:24). That is, their worship must be heartfelt/sincere and according to God’s standard of truth. In the Scriptures, local churches worshiped God in New Testament times during their assemblies by praying (1 Corinthians 14:15),

teaching God's word (Acts 20:7), taking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7), financial giving on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and collectively singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16).

Matthew 15:9 says, "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." If you want to worship God acceptably, you should join yourself to the church of His choice and worship Him only according to the teachings of the Scriptures. Unfortunately, there are many churches today that have exchanged true worship for vain worship by engaging in practices that are entirely unauthorized by God's word. Therefore, you should seek to join the church of God's choice that is focused on worshiping God in spirit and truth!

### **The church of God's choice has the right work**

Every church engages in some kind of work. Most churches have assemblies and engage in a form of worship. Most churches are focused in some way on teaching their beliefs to those who are not Christians. However, many churches also engage in works such as: Feeding the world's hungry, building shelters, operating daycares, providing secular education, organizing social and recreational activities (i.e. sports leagues, theatrical productions, dinners, field trips), etc.

If you have joined the church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether it attempts to work in only the same ways as the church of God's choice. Within the church of God's choice, all the work is accomplished either by individual members of the church working to fulfill their responsibilities as followers of Christ or by local churches carrying out their God-given work. Individual members have the responsibility to live holy lives, to teach the gospel, to visit, to show hospitality, to do good to everyone according to the opportunity that is presented, etc. However, a local church has only been given three areas of work. First, a local church has the responsibility to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Second, a local church has the responsibility to edify the saved (Ephesians 4:11-16). Third, a local

church has the responsibility to show benevolence toward needy Christians (Romans 15:25-27).

Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Everything that God's people do must have Bible authority – including all of the works that they do. You see, even if a church engages in a work that *seems* to accomplish a good thing, God is not pleased with any work that He has not authorized in the Scriptures. Therefore, you should seek to join the church of God's choice that is focused on carrying out a God-approved work in a God-approved way!

### **The church of God's choice has the right designation**

Every church has a designation (name). There are Catholic churches, Baptist churches, Methodist churches, Pentecostal churches, Presbyterian churches, Apostolic churches, Nazarene churches, Lutheran churches, Seventh-Day Adventist churches, Mormon churches, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian churches, Wesleyan churches, etc. Then, there are churches that do not belong to any of these major denominations, but still have a way of designating themselves.

If you have joined the church of your own choice, you should carefully consider whether it uses the same designations as the church of God's choice. Although many passages of Scripture simply refer to this church as "the church" (see Acts 8:1) and refer to the church by its location or its makeup (see Galatians 1:2; Romans 16:4), remember that Jesus said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). It is, therefore, "the church of God" which has been "purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). It is Christ's body (Colossians 1:18), His kingdom (John 18:36), and His bride (Revelation 19:7; Ephesians 5:22-33). Therefore, it is only fitting that Christ's church be commonly designated as the church of God or the church of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 16:16).

1 Peter 4:11 says, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God." Although name is not the only important point to consider when joining a church (as there are many "churches of God" and



“churches of Christ” that are not teaching and practicing the doctrines of Christ), it is not insignificant either. I challenge you to search the Bible for the name of the church you are attempting to join or have already joined. If it cannot be found in the Scriptures, question whether that church truly belongs to Jesus Christ. Therefore, you should seek to join a church that is focused on doing all things according to the authority of Jesus Christ – even in calling itself by a name used in the Scriptures for the church!

## ***Joining The Church Of God’s Choice***

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Every member of every church is headed somewhere after their lives on this earth are over. Every person (whether affiliated with a church or not) will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell. While it is true that no church is capable of saving anyone, it is important to recognize that those who are saved are **only** in the church of God’s choice! So, you should be interested in joining this church – and only joining this church.

### **The danger of man-made churches**

It is commonly believed that all (or nearly all) denominations and religious organizations that believe in Jesus Christ are part of the church of Christ. Many people simply view all of the different religious organizations as being branches of the church of Christ. So, they picture the church of Christ as being a big umbrella – with Baptist churches, Methodist churches, Pentecostal churches, Presbyterian churches, Nazarene churches, Christian churches, etc. under it. Together, they make up the church of Christ.

However, this is not the Biblical view of the church of God’s choice. God simply did not need or create any of these other churches. And, He has never authorized their existence. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures, God was able to accomplish all of His purposes in His church – without any of these man-made churches! In fact, these churches did

not come into existence until hundreds of years after the church that Jesus established. So, if God did not need any of these man-made churches in the New Testament times, why should we believe that He needs them now?

The fact is that He does not need them and they do not actually fulfill His purposes. In fact, they work contrary to His purposes by teaching doctrines that are not in full harmony with the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Listen to Matthew 15:13-14: “But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.’”

Even though man-made churches promise eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, they are leading people away from the truth of Jesus Christ. And, one day, God will uproot them! While you have the opportunity to change your life, please do not blindly join the church of your own choice and follow the doctrines and traditions of man. Instead, recognize that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Determine to only be part of His church and do all things by His authority (Colossians 3:17). Remember that His truth will set you free from sin (John 8:31-32)!

### **How to be added to the church of Christ**

The church of Christ meets all of the identification marks that are given in the pages of Scripture. It is the church of God’s choice. But, will you make it the church of your choice also? If so, you will want to have your name enrolled in Heaven as being a member of His church, and be counted among all the saved.

As we have already considered, you are added to the church of God’s choice when you hear His word (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus Christ (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). Please recognize that you cannot buy your way into this church. Nor can you work your way into this church. Instead, God only adds you to His church whenever you are obedient to His commandments, through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ! Then, you

must live a life of faithful obedience to Jesus Christ (Revelation 2:10) – as a member of His church.

## **How to join a local church**

As you are added by God to the church of His choice, you will also want to join yourself to a local church of Christ that only believes and practices that which God approves. For, as a Christian, you should desire to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11) and you must not join yourself to those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 1:9-11).

Whenever you have located a local church of Christ that is committed to doing everything by the authority of Jesus Christ, you should express your desire to join them (see Acts 9:26). Christians are joined together in local churches by mutual agreement with one another to work and worship together in order to accomplish the purposes of God. Finally, if there is no local church in your community that faithfully follows the pattern of the New Testament, you should attempt to start one by teaching other people to follow Jesus Christ and join your efforts to practice pure, New Testament Christianity!

## ***Conclusion***

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Are you a member of the church of God's choice? Or, has your choice in a church differed from God's choice? Although mankind often chooses churches by criteria that seems right to himself, recognize that if you want to be saved eternally you must submit yourself to God and be part of His church. No other church will be sufficient. Jesus only bought one church with His blood! Please diligently evaluate the choices that you have made by the pattern revealed in the New Testament Scriptures. If you will hold fast to this pattern, it will lead you to Jesus Christ, you will only be part of the church of God's choice, and you will be saved eternally!

## ***Study Questions***

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How did you choose a church to join (if you are a member of any church)?

### **1. God Only Chose One Church**

How many churches did God promise to establish?

How many churches did God establish?

### **2. Identifying The Church Of God's Choice**

Who is the right Founder of the church of God's choice?

What is the right beginning of the church of God's choice?

What is the right doctrine of the church of God's choice?

What are the right terms of admission to the church of God's choice?

What is the right structure of the church of God's choice?

What is the right worship of the church of God's choice?

What is the right work of the church of God's choice?

What is the right designation of the church of God's choice?

### **3. Joining The Church Of God's Choice**

What is the danger of joining man-made churches?

How can you be added to the church of Christ?

How can you join a local church of Christ?

**\*Are you a member of the church of God's choice?**