

Finding a Family

How Does One Choose a Church?

Imagine Joe, a man raised without any faith background.

He began to read the Gospels out of curiosity, after a friend gave him a copy of the Bible. As he read about Jesus, Joe was surprised to find himself captivated. He started to explore the reasons for faith, and he slowly became convinced that Jesus truly is God, just as he claimed to be. Joe realizes that his life can no longer remain the same; he wants to follow Jesus and be a faith-filled Christian.

Joe visits different churches and tries them out.

He really liked the music in one church, the friendly atmosphere in another, and the dynamic preaching of various pastors. But one thing is very troubling to Joe. Each church claims to get its teaching straight from the Bible, yet he finds that the churches disagree on many important matters of faith and morals. He knows that, just like in math or science, two conflicting teachings cannot both be true. How can he be certain that a particular church is faithfully teaching all that Jesus intended, without error or omission?

Has Joe been going about this the wrong way?

As he prays about all of this, Joe realizes that he had been seeking a church that fit his own preferences and tastes, as if he were looking for a new gym or country club. Shouldn't his decision be based on something more than his musical preferences, or his appreciation of a particular preacher? Shouldn't his decision be based on truth, and on what Jesus desires for his life, even if it does not line up with his own initial expectations or personal tastes?

Joe decides to search for the Church that Jesus started.

In his reading of the Acts of the Apostles, Joe saw a beautiful family of faith begun by Jesus and built upon the apostles. Reflecting on this, Joe concludes, "If Jesus gave us a Church, and it is still around today, then that's the Church that I want to belong to. I want to be part of that family of faith. I want to receive all of the gifts that Jesus intended me to have on my journey with him to heaven."

Joe continues his search in an unexpected place.

He knows that the Catholic Church has been around longer than the other churches in town. But he has heard so many bad things about the Catholic Church over its long history, and the recent scandals make it the last church he would ever want to join. As Joe thinks back upon the New Testament, however, he remembers that the twelve apostles struggled with sin and brokenness, and the early Church was full of saints and sinners. Reluctantly, he decides to give the Catholic Church a quick look, so that he can cross it off his list.

What would Joe find?

Joe is fictional, but many people have been on a faith journey like his. As they distinguish truth from misconception, countless people have been surprised to discover that the Catholic Church has the same characteristics as the Church in the Acts of the Apostles, but with centuries of growth and development. In this message series, we will explore some of these aspects that a person like Joe might discover about the Catholic faith.