A Church Family **[1]**

Submitted by Wessel on Monday, 21 February 2011 - 22:57
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Last week the following [2] was retweeted and came across my Twitter stream: *A Christian without a church family is an orphan*. Sadly, I can attest that this assertion is true.

I have been working since the beginning of the year. I am living somewhere temporarily until I can find a place to rent long-term; somewhere closer to work. This has placed me in a bit of a predicament: where do I find a church family? I was truly blessed in Stellenbosch: the church where I was, was not big, but it was big on heart, friendship and fellowship. And the Bible teaching—which initially drew me—was great. It was with a heavy heart that I left there. I try to keep in touch with the people, but also know that I can't cling on anymore. Thankfully there are never any permanent goodbyes between Christians.

Because I do not know how long it is going to be before I find a new place to live permanently, I have been weary to choose one church and settle down there. I do not know how wise it would be to start investing myself somewhere, only to have to leave after a month or two. Then again, the alternative of wandering lonesomely for this time also is not ideal.

It might seem strange that I say I would "invest" myself in a church in only a month or two. But the truth is that I have a yearning to be part of a Christian family again; to have family, accountability and teaching again. I am not looking to start volunteering left and right as soon as I touch ground, but I do have a need for real friendship and real fellowship. These things take time to build and it would be shame to have to leave people behind just as we started getting on track. And attending but distancing myself from the rest of the congregation would just be pointless.

In a way this dilemma is a small miracle of my own. For years I shunned organised churches. I guess I considered fellowship too great a risk after the hurt which I had gone through. I thought I could worship God wholly on my own. Meeting as a congregation is never commanded in Scripture, after all. And that is true. But after years, I felt drained and spiritually weak. And, ironically, it was only after I had returned to communal worship (although I obviously still have my own quiet time) that I learned how community was not strictly commanded, but modeled for us (and that from Scripture!). The Trinity, the relationship of Yeshua and the church, marriage, and the references to community in the Bible all demonstrate order, cooperation and service. These all point to structured, communal worship. It is not strictly *commanded* of us, but I believe that it is God's *ideal* for us. At the end of the day we follow Yeshua not because we are commanded to do so, but because we want to. And so the miracle is that God has revealed this to me, despite of where I once stood.

Over the past few weeks I have visited several churches in the area and I am happy to report that the ones I have been at look really solid. They have mostly been CESA churches, but also a couple of Baptist churches. I shall not give any recommendations, as I cannot judge a church on only one or two visits. And, if you are looking for a church yourself, it might be best to investigate for yourself. Investigate first what you are looking for in a church and what your motivations are. After that, try to keep a firm, but open mind.

What struck me visiting these churches was how different they are to each other. Truthfully, I have only attended a handful of different churches in my life and some of them looked very much the same due to their heritage. But I have now seen small churches and large churches, quiet and loud, interactive and less so. And I can't really say that one of them is "right" and "wrong". Yes, you need to check a church against its teaching and Scripture, but it is also amazing to see how the Holy Spirit works differently in different communities. Some have special requirements, while others look similar, even if they do not cooperate directly or have contact with each other.

One church which I attended struck a cord with me. I am strongly considering attending there until I have to move on again. But I need to pray on this matter. And if you can do so for me as well, it will

be greatly appreciated.

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