

1. Compare the church's doctrinal statement to one you know is good. Ask yourself if the doctrinal statement is missing anything important. Often, churches have very short doctrinal statements that don't say much at all, i.e. they have a very wide umbrella. Some will undoubtedly have wrong doctrine. What about the fundamentals of the faith (inspiration/inerrancy of Scripture, Trinity, virgin birth and deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, resurrection, salvation by faith alone, second coming)?
2. Compare the church's practice to their doctrinal statement. Is the statement faithfully followed? Doctrinal statements are fine, but the walk might not match the talk.
3. Is the church denominationally affiliated (e.g. Southern Baptist or Presbyterian or whatever) or is it non-denominational (e.g. a "community church") or is it independent (e.g. an independent fundamental Bible or Baptist Church)?
4. What kind of preaching does the pastor employ? Expository, exegetical, or topical, or is the preaching far removed from the Bible altogether? Is the central focus of the message personal "day-to-day" application or is it the text itself?
5. Check their mid-week prayer service as to seriousness about prayer. The most committed folks are usually present at this meeting, the worst attended in most churches.
6. Does the church have a scripture memorization program?
7. Do they believe a person can lose their salvation? If yes, look for another church.
8. What kind of missions does the church support? Are they primarily gospel preaching or mainly social work?
9. Where was the pastor trained? This can tell you a fair bit about his theology.
10. Does the church baptize believers only, by immersion? Can unbelievers be members?
11. Does the church have a dispensational understanding of the Bible (distinction between Israel and the church, consistent literalism, purpose of history the glory of God)?
12. Does the church use contemporary music? This will tell you their view of worship.
13. What version of the Bible is used? Is the church KJV-only? If yes, move on.
14. Is the church involved in business operations? For example, do they have a coffee shop selling coffee to the people that come in?
15. What other churches in the community does it fellowship with?
16. Does the church hold to six-day creationism? This will tell you their real approach to the Bible (is it to be taken literally?) and science (does science trump the Bible?).
17. Do they believe the pretribulational rapture and the premillennial return of Christ?
18. Does the pastor do everything, or are there other folks who teach, help out, etc.
19. Does the church have an active evangelism ministry?
20. Is there a reverence for God or is the atmosphere loose, casual, and carnival-like?
21. Is the whole church full of one kind of people? Like all young people or all white or all black or all well-to-do or something? The church should be all kinds of people. For instance, with a church full of young people, there will be no "elderly" wisdom.
22. Are folks friendly or are they cold? Did only one person greet you, or did many folks from the church do so?
23. How are folks dressed? Casually or nicely? Must women wear dresses and long hair?
24. Do men and women sit on opposite sides of the auditorium? (I am serious. This formerly was the case at a church in Ann Arbor.)
25. Is the church Arminian or Calvinistic? You can tell by looking at the doctrinal statement and seeing if they believe total depravity or unconditional personal election to salvation? If so, the church is more on the Calvinistic side.
26. Does the church take a stand on separation? Homosexuality? Abortion? Euthanasia? Open theism? New evangelicalism? Divorce and remarriage?
27. Does the church believe in revelatory gifts such as tongues for today? Do they believe tongues is necessary for salvation? If so, move on.
28. What is the church's position on Bill Gothard's teachings?
29. Does they believe the ceremonial law is for today? Are they covenant in theology?
30. Don't expect to find a perfect church!