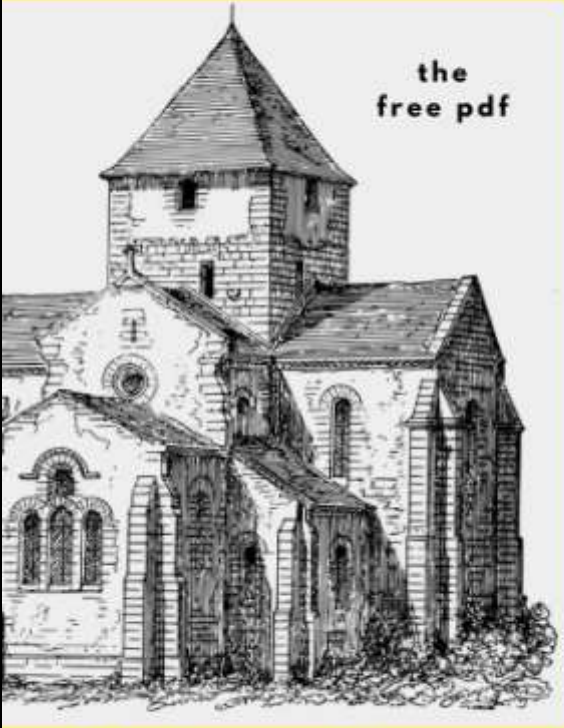


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24 signs of a super
healthy church

24 Signs of a Super Healthy Church

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24 Signs Your Church Is Super Healthy

Recent statistics show that every year in the US, 4000 churches close their doors while only 1000 new churches are planted. Among existing churches, half did not add any new members to their ranks in the last two years. From 1990 to 2000, the combined membership of all Protestant denominations dropped by almost 5 million members, while the US population rose by 24 million.¹

These are alarming statistics!

Each church that shuts down represents real people who have lost their church family. So if you are someone looking for a new church, someone wondering if their church is built to last, or someone who would love to help their church improve, here are 24 signs of a super healthy church.

(Notice these are just signs. I don't get into how to accomplish these healthy indicators in this article. These are just descriptions of 24 observable things a healthy church will do. The goal here is to help you identify what a healthy and unhealthy church will look like. These signs are in no particular order, though I personally believe number 1 and number 24 are most significant.)

1. Expository Preaching

When Christians hear the words “expository preaching” they usually think of line-by-line, chapter-by chapter, book-by-book preaching. But what expository preaching means in its most basic form is that the point of the sermon is the same point of the Bible passage being taught.

To accomplish expository preaching, it’s easier to preach systematically through a book of the Bible. But it’s not impossible to preach topically while being expository. As long as specific Scriptures are driving the content of the sermon, your church will be super healthy.

Huge problems arise when pastors preach their opinions, or preach messages that are Christian but not related to that Sunday’s Bible passage. God gave us his word so his Church would have a clear light for its path. A church that is loose on unpacking the truth found in the whole canon of Scripture will not be healthy.

(Psalm 119:105, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 3:16)

2. A Clear Discipleship Path

A church is super healthy when you can walk through the doors and get a clear answer to this question, “How are the members and attenders of

this church disciplined?” Some churches emphasize small groups, classes, one-on-one mentorship, or some combination of methods like these. There are pros and cons to each discipleship model, but what’s most important is that there is a clear path for spiritual growth for anyone who wants to put the work in. A confusing, ambiguous, ever-changing discipleship model is a sign of an unhealthy church.

(Matthew 28:19-20, 1 Corinthians 14:32-33, 40)

3. Utilization of the People’s Gifts

There’s going to be times in church life where there is a real need for someone, just anyone, to fill holes in the volunteer roster, especially when the church is just getting started. But a sign of a healthy church is when leadership seeks to identify the gifts within the body of the church and then utilizes those gifts.

Churches that treat everyone the same are unhealthy and show that they care more about accomplishing their own goals than developing their people in Christ. A church will be super healthy and happy when the majority of its people are serving in areas that correspond to their God-given gifts and desire.

(Romans 12:3-8, 1 Peter 4:10)

4. Gender Diversity in Public/Leadership Roles

This point is not about male and female pastors, an important topic for a different article. But whatever your church believes about the pastorate, there are countless other roles in the church that both men and women should fulfill. If you walk into a church and the preacher, the band, the staff, and all other visible leadership roles are only one gender, it's a sign someone who has authority in the church has an unhealthy understanding of the value God places on both men and women within the church.

(Philippians 4:3, Romans 16:1-5)

5. Racial Diversity

Racial diversity is a no-brainer. If your church only targets a certain race, it's not accomplishing the heart behind the Great Commission. Now to be fair, for reasons outside of many churches' control (such as geographical location) sometimes a super healthy church will still have a greater population of one race compared to another. But a healthy church will be showing signs of reaching out to people of all shapes, types, and colors. Their staff, leadership team, and key volunteers will reflect the diversity God desires within his church.

(Galatians 3:27-28)

6. Cultural Diversity

Notice the difference between racial and cultural diversity. There's a huge difference between someone's biological makeup and the culture they've grown up in. Again, for reasons that are not sinful, every church will probably have one cultural influence that is greater compared to others. A suburban church will have a different cultural feel than an inner-city church. To act like both should be the same culturally would be naive. They should be the same biblically, but the Holy Spirit can work through any culture (unless inherently sinful beliefs or practices are worked into that culture). Each church is uniquely gifted to better reach a certain lost people group compared to other cultural groups. This is just a reality to be embraced.

But a healthy church will not confuse their culture with Christianity. Christianity is not cultural. It is the truth that can permeate any culture, using what is good in that culture and destroying what is sinful within that culture. A healthy church will seek to celebrate, embrace, and encourage cultural inclusiveness and diversity. If a church is afraid of other cultures and looks down on them, it is not a healthy church.

(Romans 14:13-23, Galatians 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

7. Economic Diversity

Again, race, culture, and economic status should be viewed differently within the church. To assume one race or culture is always rich or poor is an unhealthy view of reality. Throughout the pages of Scripture, God instructs his church to never show favoritism, including economic favoritism. For geographical reasons, most churches will probably have many people of similar economic status, but this should not be by design. A healthy church should never have only one economic status within their membership ranks. Whenever possible, a healthy church goes out of its way to embrace people regardless of their wealth or lack of wealth.

(James 2:1-13)

8. Age Diversity

A healthy church will do all it can to reach people of every age. A very clear sign of a dying church is a church that is literally dying off. A church cannot survive long-term if its members are not inviting to younger generations. And if a church is full of young people, it will lack the wisdom that can only come with living many years. A healthy church will be full of young people who want to be around older people, and older people who want to be around younger people. A healthy church will teach

its members to celebrate the gifts and perspectives of both the younger and older.

(1 Peter 5:1-5, 1 Timothy 4:12)

9. Children Will Be Prioritized Equally With Adults

A healthy church sign is when the whole family is prioritized. Children are humans, and God loves humans. A church that gives its B-team to the kid's ministry is not healthy. A healthy children's ministry will be fun, but more than that it will teach kids the Scriptures, helping them to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Certainly kids should be treated differently than adults, but a healthy church will treat them with equal value and spiritual concern.

(Ephesians 6:4, Matthew 19:14)

10. Regular Overseas Mission Trips/Missionary Support

Not every Christian is called to travel overseas with the gospel. But the local church is a part of God's universal church, and the global church has been called to reach all people everywhere with the gospel. If the local church does not have a concern for unreached people groups or nations where the gospel presentation is limited, then God's global

church will be lacking here too. A healthy church invests time, people, and resources to help the whole world come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This is a strong sign of a healthy church because supporting global missions often does not help the church in a visible, immediate, self-centered way. It's encouraging for the church to hear reports from overseas missionaries, but it doesn't impact the church in many visible and direct ways. But a healthy church does things for God, not for visibility sake.

(Matthew 28:19-20, Romans 15:20)

11. An Emphasis on Numerical Growth

There are some Christians who think numbers should never be looked at. But the reality is a healthy church is growing numerically. This is not the article to debate the mega-church model versus the church-planting model. The point being made here is that a healthy church will be working to reach more and more people. Focusing on the numbers only becomes a sign of an unhealthy church when this focus usurps every other focus.

Notice I said a healthy church is growing numerically. This does not mean that a church growing numerically is always healthy. A church

can grow for unhealthy, inflated reasons like advertisements, gimmicks, musical talent, entertainment, and other strategies that do nothing but bring people through the doors. A healthy church grows the right way, which is through its people growing spiritually and reaching out to other people.

Numerical growth is not everything, but a super healthy church will be growing numerically. If your pastor makes you feel guilty for not inviting people to hear his amazing sermons, that's unhealthy. But if your pastor never challenges you to invite your unbelieving friends to church, that's an unhealthy sign too. There's not a rigid formula here. But you'll feel it if your church is too focused on numerical growth.

(Acts 2:47, Acts 5:14, Matthew 28:19-20)

12. An Emphasis on Spiritual Growth

A healthy church knows that numerical growth will directly correspond to its existing members' spiritual growth. If the current attenders of the church are totally apathetic towards inviting their friends to church, it's probably because they don't see the value their church is offering. But when someone feels like their church is really investing into their spiritual growth, they are going to be motivated to invite others to experience the same.

A healthy church doesn't just want to take pictures of a full sanctuary on Sunday morning to post on social media. A healthy church wants to know its members are growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ, and one sign of spiritual growth will be numerical growth. These two are definitely connected for super healthy churches.

(Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Peter 1:3-11)

13. A Thoughtful Approach to the Use of Modern Tools, Techniques, and Technology

There's nothing inherently unhealthy about overhead projectors, flannel graph, paneled walls, or orange carpet. And there's nothing holy about HD quality projectors, intelligent lighting, and the latest tech. But a healthy church wants to use whatever will aid them in communicating the gospel most clearly to the people they've been commissioned to serve. If you live in a culture where technology is a part of the normal way of life, a healthy church will factor that into their strategy.

Some churches will feel it's best to be simplistic because of the oversaturated technology driven culture in which it finds itself. Other churches will try to speak the language of the people they are trying to reach, which means they will speak the language of tech. A healthy church, however, will

be thoughtful and intentional about how they use (or don't use) every tool available to them.

An unhealthy church wants to be cool for coolness sake. Usually they fail miserably and end up looking like a dad overreaching to connect with his teenage children through trying to be hip. An unhealthy church wants to be boring because it fears change. When you step into a church like this, it feels like you got time-warped backwards twenty years. A healthy church embraces what's helpful, isn't afraid to change with the times, and uses everything it can to best proclaim the unchanging truth of God's word.

(Ephesians 5:15-16, Colossians 4:2-6)

14. A Healthy Church Doesn't Turn Everything Into a Silly Joke

A super healthy church will be full of people and leaders who don't take themselves too seriously. But a super healthy church also attacks their mission of reaching the lost and growing God's people with intensity, focus, and seriousness. A healthy church knows there's no time to play church games.

On the flipside, if the people at church never take a break to play a game and fellowship, that's not healthy either. Basketball, volleyball, and even

board games have been used as olive branches, bringing in unreached people and connecting Christians through common interests. With that said, a healthy church will use fun for very serious reasons.

If the pastor gets on stage after a reverent song and cracks a silly joke, it probably means he's uncomfortable with holiness. A healthy church is serious for all the right reasons and knows how to have fun for the right reasons too. An unhealthy church just wants to be silly so it can attract people and be liked. They want to be relevant for relevancy sake, not for redemption purposes.

(Titus 2:7, Ephesians 5:4) [Is Humor Biblical?](#)

15. Healthy Church Discipline Actually Happens

A healthy church tries to model itself after instructions given to New Testament churches. Throughout the Bible, God has instructed his leaders to lovingly correct and discipline the flock when they start to turn from him. If a church never disciplines anyone, it is a sign that it is afraid of the people, don't really know what its people are doing, or it just doesn't understand the role the church should have in a Christian's life.

If a member of the church is sleeping around, getting drunk, being disrespectful, and never repents

when they do blatant sins like these, it is the church's job to lovingly discipline this person. The church should not be a sin-Nazi, but when a sin is clearly defined as such in the Bible and a member of the church is living in it, a healthy church loves this person by confronting them.

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13) [9 Levels of Church Discipline Supported in Scripture](#)

16. The Church Is Led By a Body of Elders, Not a Captivating Speaker

Americans love us some celebrities. Unfortunately celebrity culture often times makes its way into the church. But a healthy church is not run by an individual. The New Testament is very clear that a church should be led by a group of elders. While it's not unhealthy for a church to experience growth through the gift of a captivating preacher, when this person is idolized it is only a matter of time before other signs of an unhealthy church will begin to emerge. This pastor will eventually crumble under the pressure, take too many liberties because of his feelings of entitlement, or the church will eventually reject him since all idols are revealed for what they are in due time.

A healthy church is not sustained through the personality and drive of one person. These unhealthy churches grow fast and die even faster.

(Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5)

17. Communion and Baptism Are Done Regularly

While communion and baptism may seem liturgical, these are clear commands in Scripture that are to be done by healthy churches. In fact, administrating these two biblical sacraments is one of the indicators of what makes a church a church (along with preaching, the fellowship of the saints, and church discipline).

Baptism is God's way of publicly identifying his people. If a church doesn't baptize people regularly, it either has limited converts or doesn't value public declarations for Jesus – both of which are signs of an unhealthy church.

Communion is to be done as a way of regularly remembering the saving, cleansing, and regenerating work of Jesus Christ. When a church forgets about communion, a church will forget about what Christ has accomplished for her through the cross and resurrection. Communion is also a built in time for people to examine themselves before the Lord. A regular time of group confession and repentance of sin as a church is a very healthy sign.

(Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:38, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

18. Original Sin and Personal Sin Are Attacked From the Pulpit

When I say “attacked” I don’t mean people are shamed for their sin. A healthy church submits to the word of God, and the Bible says that all have been born with a sinful nature and that all sin on a regular bases. If the church never talks about the biblical solutions to the problems caused by both original sin and ongoing personal sin, it probably means the church is there to motivate you to embrace yourself, to believe in yourself, and to do other things that are unbiblical and rooted in a postmodern society.

If the church never paints a picture of how bad the situation has gotten, they will never be able to proclaim how bright the light of Christ really is. If you don’t understand the problem, you can’t possibly value the solution. And Jesus Christ is always the solution.

(Psalm 51:5, 1 John 1:8-10, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23) [What Does the Bible Say About Believing in Yourself?](#)

19. Financial Transparency and Integrity

A healthy church owns its financial decisions. Whether they pay their pastor above the congregational average or well below the average, a healthy church has no shame when it comes to its use of money. There are valid arguments on both sides when it comes to making public the pastor's salary. I personally believe a church can be extremely financially transparent without putting a pastor and his family through uncomfortable situations most people never have to deal with.

This topic relates directly to having a group of elders. A healthy church makes financial decisions based upon a group of leaders who include the congregation's support. An unhealthy church will be run by just one person who does whatever he wants. Every dollar should be accounted for in a healthy church, and members of the church should have a clear understanding of how tithe dollars are spent.

Each church will handle this differently, but if you ask about finances and your church gets mad at you, you are definitely at an unhealthy church. A healthy church delights to give an account for its use of money because it should be an easy checkmark, proving it indeed is a healthy church. If you're

getting the cold shoulder when you ask about money, that's always an unhealthy sign.

(1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 12:12-14, Galatians 6:6) [What Does the Bible Say About Paying the Pastor?](#)

20. A Strong Doctrinal Statement that Unites Rather than Divides

Most churches never grow because they become known for what they are against rather than what they stand for. A healthy church loves the Bible, therefore a healthy church will love doctrine, theology, apologetics, mission statements, and biblical studies, as these are applications in which the Bible should be valued above every other book or source of knowledge.

The key to a healthy church, though, is having the ability to use doctrine as a unifying force rather than a dividing force. A healthy church will take a stand on top tier issues essential to Christianity, but it will also know how to teach on other topics while leaving room for individual Christians to disagree.

To be a member of a healthy church, you should have to agree on things like Jesus' divinity, the Trinity, the inerrancy of Scripture, and other top tier issues that are crucial to orthodoxy. But if you can't be a member of a church because you have a

slightly different view on predestination, something is wrong.

As Augustine said, “In essential unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”

(John 5:39, Ezra 7:10, Psalm 119:15-16, Psalm 119:24)

21. A Healthy Church Works With Other Churches

A sign of a healthy church is an observable value placed on other ministries and churches. A church that never works with other churches typically has an elitist attitude. A healthy church, however, knows that it is not the center of God’s kingdom. Each church has a special part to play, but anytime a church begins to elevate its own status over other good churches, the formation of a cult is not too far behind.

Sometimes churches will just not work well together, but if your church can’t work with anyone, that’s an unhealthy sign. A healthy church knows how to include others without compromising its own goals and beliefs.

(Galatians 3:28, John 17:20-23)

22. A Healthy Church Has Younger and Older Leaders With a Culture of Mentoring

While the whole church should show age diversity, a healthy church takes special pains to make sure it is always multiplying future leaders. A good church is not threatened by gifted younger ministers. A healthy church celebrates younger people when they show an aptitude for ministry. They will give young people opportunities to preach, to lead worship, and to take on responsibilities of consequence.

If a young person plants a church, naturally that church will probably have a higher average of younger leaders. But a wise leader will make sure he surrounds himself with people who have walked his trail before. If a young pastor never elevates leaders older than him, it probably means he is insecure and doesn't like to listen. A young pastor should not be looked down on because of his age, but a young pastor should also not look down on older people because of their age either.

(1 Peter 5:1-5, 1 Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:1-8)

23. A Concern for the Needy and Oppressed

A healthy church is about proclaiming the gospel. But if a church is not also proclaiming the gospel through their actions, they are not healthy. A healthy church knows how to balance the

importance of actually explaining the gospel and showing the gospel. It's easier to show the gospel. No one gets persecuted for helping the poor and being a good member of the community. Therefore the temptation for the church will be to serve well and proclaim Christ poorly.

With that said, the solution is not to abandon acts of charity. A healthy church will use its charitable acts as a way of verbally and visibly proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

(Mark 1:38, James 2:14-26, James 1:27, Hebrews 13:16, Galatians 2:10)

24. A Healthy Church Loves and Proclaims the Glory of God

There are many, many biblical topics a healthy church will teach on. But super healthy churches link everything back to the glory of God. When the glory of God is the main theme of the church, everything else will fall into place. Huge problem occur when anything but the glory of God begin to take center stage. Everything is about God. Everything is meant to glorify him. The greatest sign of a healthy church is a church that views everything through the lens of God's glory.

(Romans 11:36, Colossians 1:16, Romans 1:5, Psalms 115:1, Philippians 1:21)

A Bonus Sign of a Super Healthy Church: 25. Honest Self-Assessment

In conclusion, there are countless signs to a healthy church. This list was just 24 really important signs. And it's good to remember that a super healthy church will never be a perfect church. Churches who need to improve in some of the signs mentioned here can still be super healthy.

Perhaps the last sign of a healthy church worth mentioning is the desire to continue to improve. All healthy churches can take an honest look at their own faults without becoming defensive, self-condemning, or clinging to denial. A super healthy church will always seek the grace of God for improvement – all for his glory.

(2 Corinthians 13:5, 1 John 1:8-10, Psalm 139:23-24)

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God bless!

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