

## THE OR SERIES 4: THIS CHURCH OR THAT ONE?

...Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. (Ephesians 5:23, NIV)

JONES, HOGAN, NICKLAUS, OR WOODS? Maybe someone else (Zaharias, Wright, Whitworth, Sorenstam?). The debate over the game's greatest player will never be resolved, for we all make our cases. But the conversation around the game will be ever livelier because this is so. Golf, like all sports, may have more vibrancy on barstools and tattered couches than on the field of play.

To our fault, however, we may bring this arguing culture to places where it does not belong. Church, for instance.

There are plenty of arguments within churches. This is sad but true. But before we even get there, when we are simply asking which church we might attend—as one new in the faith or picking up churchgoing later in life or moving to a new town—the answers we hear may come packed with preferential bias: “I grew up in this church.” “The music is so loud there.” “The people are nice.” “My spouse doesn't agree with the pastor.” “It's close to home.” “The service times are convenient.”

Now, we're thinking people. We can recognize the incidental nature of these many assessments. But what are the real questions, and are we asking them?

Foremost, a church you want to attend should be preaching Jesus as we see him in Scripture. Who was he and how is he shown to be God? What did he do when he came to Earth and what is the effect of that work? Do the answers your church gives to these questions line up with what you read on the pages of your Bible?

Following that course, a church you want to attend leans on Scripture as its reference point. Not historically lauded theologians. Not Christian psychologists. Not catechisms or creeds. Not novels or poems or movies. Any of these may be employed by a teacher to help us see Scripture more clearly, but none can take the place of God's Word.

Third, in a church you want to attend the people are focused on mutual edification for the purpose of growth in the faith. Are the brothers and sisters using their gifts to serve one another? Moreover, is God calling you to use *your* gifts there?

Good churches are out there. Find one and worship and serve Jesus there!

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/dwaxRWBh56U>

**Opening questions** Who do *you* think is the greatest golfer of all time? What personal preferences influence your choice? • What has made it hard for you to find the “right” church, now or in the past?

**READING** Galatians 1:3-9; Romans 12:3-6; James 2:1-4

### The unexchangeable gospel (Galatians 1)

How critical was it to Paul that the Galatians received and followed correct teaching about Jesus? What do verses 3-4 include in that teaching?

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### Many as one (Romans 12)

How are the people of the church supposed to interact with one another? What have you seen stand in the way of their doing this?

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### Any and all (James 2)

Who should be made to feel welcome in a local church? Is this being done well in the church you attend?

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