

# 5 Tips on Leaving a Church the Right Way

By **Acts 29 Network**

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I met yesterday with a friend who is leaving our church. We had a good conversation about his reasons for leaving (they are legitimate) and then some discussion about how he can “leave well.” I told him that, based on my experience with people leaving our church or coming to our church after leaving another one, most people don’t leave well.

## **Here are a few ideas on how to leave a church well:**

**1. Have a good reason for leaving.** Before you go, evaluate whether your reasons are good, legitimate and God-honoring. Here’s a thought-provoking post exploring [good, possible and bad reasons for leaving a church](#) (and here’s a [discussion](#) about this post). I don’t think this list is comprehensive, but it’s good to make you think. If your reasons are good, go. If not, stay.

**2. Communicate your decision to leave with the appropriate leaders.** If you’re an active part of the church, leaders will need to know you’re leaving. If you are serving, communicate it to your Ministry Team leader. If you are in a Community Group, communicate it to the leader. If you are connected with an elder or pastor, communicate it with them. Personal communication is preferable to written communication, but make sure you communicate.

**3. Tell these leaders the truth about why you’re leaving.** If you have legitimate reasons to leave then you have nothing to hide or worry about. If the reasons for leaving will sting church leadership, deliver it in the spirit of Proverbs 27:6, “*Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*” Scripture commands us to “speak the truth in love” (Eph 4:15), which

means you don't couch the real, sometimes difficult reasons behind a bunch of spiritualized nonsense. God may use your reasons for leaving to help the church or its leaders. I've had at least one "exit interview" that was immensely helpful to me as a leader—some of the truth of it stung, but it helped me grow. Whatever you do, don't just leave without telling your leaders.

**4. Appropriately transition or conclude your ministry commitments.** If you've been an active part of ministry, your role will need to be transitioned. Hopefully you've been training and developing somebody to take your place anyway, but if you haven't, give your leaders an appropriate time to find others to serve in your capacity. This period shouldn't drag on, but you also should not just drop the ball on the people you've been committed to.

**5. Leave graciously.** In Ray Pritchard's post on this topic, he writes:

"[Leaving] graciously means you refuse to speak evil of those who remain in the church. Look forward, not backward. Focus on your new church, not your old one. Think carefully before you speak about your former congregation. Don't say anything that could be remotely construed as criticism. Even casual comments could stir up needless controversy. Let the Golden Rule guide all your comments public and private."

If you've read this post and realize that you didn't leave a church well in the past, it might be wise to circle back to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If you have gossiped or stirred up division, you should make it right, apologizing not only to the leaders of that church but also to the people to whom you gossiped.

In the end, remember that Jesus loves the church you're leaving and the one you're going to—His blood was shed for both. Both churches are part of his bride. Do his bride the honor of leaving well.