

# What the Local Church Should Ask You

What forms the basis of  
fellowship between Christians  
and a local church?

# Fellowship

- Fellowship exists in two capacities:
  - In a general condition of all brethren who share the common faith
  - And the in the special relationship Christians share in a local church
  - 1John 1: 3, 7 - “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ... 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

# Fellowship

- 2John 9 - “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”
- Acts 9:26-28 - “And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.”

# Fellowship

- In determining whether one can be in fellowship with a local church, he should determine if the church is the Lord's church
  - Matt. 16:18 - "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."
  - 1Cor. 1:2 - "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours"

# Fellowship

- 2Cor. 3:1-2 - “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? 2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men”
- Rom. 16:1-2 - “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.”

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- Where were you last a faithful member?
  - Acts 18:27 - “And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace”
  - 2Cor. 3:1 - “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?”

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- What do you expect in a local church?
- What do you expect from a local church?

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- Do you see the church as a gathering of people with whom you worship God, or as a place where you expect to be entertained
- Do you look forward to coming to worship or do you contemplate how often you must put in an appearance to keep your membership?
- Do you plan to visit those in need or do you expect to be visited frequently?
- Do you want Bible classes that challenge you to learn more and think more deeply about the inspired word, or do you prefer to hear the same first principles over and over again?

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- What is your understanding of fellowship and edification?
  - Are you more comfortable following the examples of faithful Christians or imitating coworkers and classmates?
  - Do you relish the idea of relationships with the other disciples here or would you prefer to be left alone to do your own thing?

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- What kind of preaching do you want?
  - 2Tim. 4:2-5 - “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”
  - 1Tim. 4:13 - “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- Do you plan to follow the leadership of the elders here?
  - Heb. 13:7, 17 - “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct... 17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- Describe your family condition
  - Married, children at home or moved away, occupation, etc. all matters that can influence your role in the congregation and profoundly impacts fellowship
  - Not the business of the local church?
  - Fellowship is the state of having the faith in common. If I do not share the same faith, or am unwilling to confirm that we share the same faith in moral family matters, then fellowship does not exist

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- Fellowship in the local church is an important matter often treated lightly.
- Both the individual and the local church should be honest and disclose all relevant information. Both need to know exactly what to expect from the other.

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- In the real world, there are cases where the individual Christian decides he cannot have fellowship with a certain local church. They must sorrowfully depart and seek a faithful assembly
- There are occasions when the church must not extend fellowship because of un-repentent sin or an immoral lifestyle. The disciple seeking fellowship should be moved to repent so that fellowship can exist

# What The Local Church Should Ask You

- 1John 1:7 - “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”
- The Adversary is pleased when they instead choose to go to another congregation that accepts their sin unconditionally

# What You Should Ask the Local Church

What forms the basis of  
fellowship between Christians  
and a local church?

# Fellowship

- Not a comprehensive or definitive list of questions; rather, it is a place to begin to determine whether we are in fellowship in the local church
- It should be noted and understood that fellowship can be both sinfully withheld or erringly extended
- Asking questions can reassure us in our fellowship
  - It can highlight areas where fellowship can improve
  - Or it can expose reasons why fellowship shouldn't exist
- Fellowship is not a right; it is a privilege and blessing that exists when disciples share the same faith and love in Christ

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- What is the church doing to reach the lost and edify the saved?
  - 1Tim. 3:15 - “But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
  - Eph. 4:11-13, 16
  - 1Cor. 14:4, 16, 19, 23-24

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- What are some special focuses of the eldership, preacher, and members?
- What are the local needs specific to that area or work, and how are they meeting them?

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- Does the preacher have a structured, balanced pattern of sermon choice?
- Evangelists can become issue-oriented hobbyists, militant church destroyers, mercenary cotton candy peddlers, etc.
- New Testament preachers addressed both contemporary needs and long term edification

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- 1John 4:1-3 - “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- 1John 2:3-6 - “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- 1John 3:1-3 - “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- How is the offering used?
  - 1Cor. 9:11-14 - “If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? 12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? 14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”
  - 1Tim. 5:16 - “If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- Does the church practice discipline?
  - 1Thes. 5:14 - “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”
  - 2Thes. 3:6 - “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”
- Churches that do it well seldom have to do it at all

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- How does the local church practice unity?
- In the faith, unity, because it is absolute
  - Eph. 4:2-6 - “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- How does the local church practice unity?
- In the faith, unity, because it is absolute
  - Gal. 6:1-2 - “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- How does the local church practice unity?
- In our faith, patience, because it is growing
  - 1Thes. 5:14 - “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- How does the local church practice unity?
- In matters of personal faith, tolerance, because God commanded it
  - Rom. 14

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- What is taught and practiced regarding moral issues: marriage, divorce, and remarriage, abortion, homosexuality, substance abuse, pornography, etc?
  - Rev. 2:12-14 - “But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16 'Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.’”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- What is the understanding and practice regarding the work of elders?
  - 1Peter 5:3 - “Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock”
  - 1Tim. 5:17 - “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- Are plans actively in place to appoint elders and deacons in the future? A local church without scriptural elders is incomplete
  - Titus 1:5 - “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”
  - Phil. 1:1 - “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons”
  - Acts 14:23 - “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

# What You Should Ask The Local Church

- Does the example of the preacher and elders encourage reverence in worship?
  - 1Tim. 2:8-9
  - Mal. 1:11-13

# Fellowship

- Fellowship is one of our greatest blessings, but we must always work to keep it so
  - Psalm 133:1-3 - “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing-Life forevermore.”