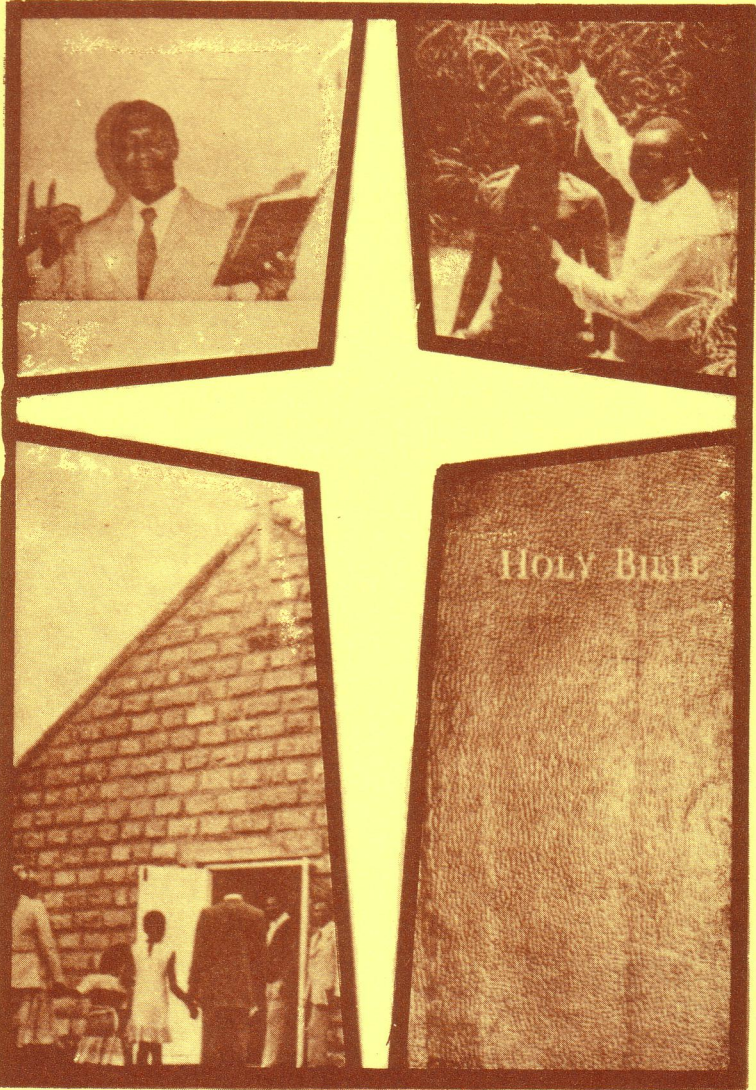


# BAPTIST BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS



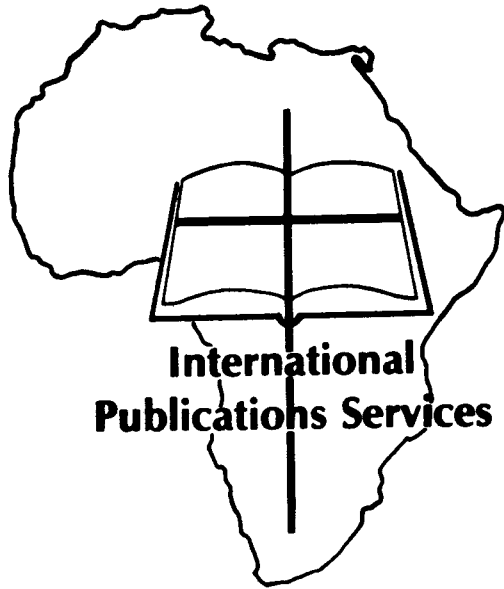
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# **BAPTIST BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS**



by  
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## **PREFACE**

Who are the Baptists? What do they believe? Why do they do the things they do? Maybe you have asked questions like these. This book seeks to answer these questions and explain about the most common beliefs and customs of Baptists. The way beliefs and customs are arranged is important. Baptists believe beliefs and customs should be arranged in the following order.

### **1. The Lord Jesus Christ**

Baptists depend upon the Lord Jesus. He is the Son of God and is the Saviour of all those who come to him in faith.

### **2. The Scriptures**

Baptists' beliefs and customs are based upon God's Word. Since the New Testament tells about Jesus who is the fulfilment of the law and prophets (the Old Testament), Baptists rely primarily upon the New Testament for their beliefs.

### **3. Biblical Teachings**

Teachings or doctrines are developed from the study of Scriptures. Doctrines depend upon all the Scriptures. Those who study doctrine will compare one verse to other verses. Many verses from several books are used to develop a doctrine.

### **4. Baptists' Beliefs**

Biblical teachings become beliefs when a person accepts them for his life. Baptists accept the teachings of the Scriptures as their beliefs. All teachings should be compared with God's Word. Baptists do not do some of the things other denominations do because they cannot find biblical evidence for those actions.

### **5. Baptist Practices or Customs**

The actions of a person come from his beliefs. These actions, which one does many times, become regular practices which are customs. Baptists believe that their customs should also be guided by God's Word.

The aim of this book is to explain Baptist beliefs and customs. It is not a manual for new Christians. It asks many questions. The answers to those questions are the author's personal understanding at this time.

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**OUTLINE**  
**CHAPTER ONE**

1. **What Were Some of the Important Teachings and Customs in the New Testament Churches?**
  - A. Jesus is Lord.
  - B. Salvation is by faith alone.
  - C. Believers should be baptized by immersion.
  - D. Church membership brings responsibilities to each member.
  
2. **What Were Some of the Wrong Teachings Which Began After the New Testament Was Written?**
  - A. To be a church member was to be in the kingdom of God.
  - B. To be baptized was to become a Christian.
  - C. To be a priest (or pastor) was to be over the members.
  - D. To follow a church council decision was the same as following the New Testament teachings.
  
3. **What Is the Believer's Authority or Guide for Faith and Customs?**
  
4. **Is the Source of Church Unity Spiritual or Physical?**
  
5. **What Is the History of the Baptists?**
  
6. **What Have We Studied About Baptists in Christian History?**

## CHAPTER ONE BAPTISTS IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Baptists are New Testament Christians. Baptist Churches are New Testament churches. Some denominations depend upon their organization for their unity. Baptists depend upon the spiritual nature of the churches for their unity. To understand these statements, we need to study the history of Christians and Baptists.

### 1. What Were Some of the Important Teachings and Customs in the New Testament Churches?

In the New Testament, we find several important teachings and customs. Here we want to study two important teachings and two important customs.

#### A. Jesus Christ is Lord.

Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Christ, is Lord. This is the most basic belief and teaching in the New Testament. Jesus is the Son of God who gave himself for man's salvation. Man now has a way of salvation. Jesus forgives man's sin. He freely gives new life to all who will come to him by faith. For Jesus to be Lord of your life, he must control it. Lord means ruler. Jesus is Lord or Ruler of a Christian's life. The believers are his servants. Christians do what Jesus wants them to do. Jesus is Lord.

#### B. Salvation is by faith alone.

The New Testament teaches that all people are sinners. A person is a sinner by nature. All are slaves to sin. Sin has made us unclean. Man's sin condemns him. His sin has made him an enemy of God. However, as believers in Christ, God gives us salvation. Salvation is being born again leaving the old sinful nature (John 3:3). Salvation is being set free from the slavery of sin (John 8:36). Salvation is being washed clean from the dirt of sin (1 John 1:7). Salvation is being freed from the penalty of sin (Romans 3:24). Salvation is being reconciled with God (2 Corinthians 5:18). Salvation comes only by turning from sin and believing in Jesus. Man cannot save himself. Jesus is man's salvation. If one repents of his sins and accepts Jesus by faith as Lord, then that person will be saved. Salvation cannot be obtained by work. It cannot be bought. It is only received as a gift from God by faith. Faith, not works, brings salvation.

**C. Believers should be baptized by immersion.**

The New Testament churches baptized believers by immersion. Immersion means "to put under water." The meaning of baptism is "to immerse." Only those who had been born again were baptized in the New Testament. They were baptized by immersion because they had been saved. They were not baptized to become Christians. The New Testament churches baptized new believers as a testimony of their salvation. This testimony of baptism was to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**D. Church membership brings responsibilities to each member.**

A goal of the New Testament was for all church members to be mature Christians. Only those who had been born again could be church members. As members of a spiritual body, they were equal before God. They had freedom in Christ. They were church members by choice. When they became members of a church, they accepted responsibility. They sought God's will for themselves as they worshipped together. Church members are responsible to God and each other.

A church is a group of people who have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and have been baptized. They worship and serve God together. As individual churches seek opportunities to work and fellowship with other churches, they form associations in their local area. When they want to work with churches in a larger area, they form a convention or a union for a whole country.

**2. What Were Some of the Wrong Teachings Which Began After the New Testament Was Written?**

Many churches have left the teachings and example of the New Testament. During the centuries that followed, many wrong teachings and practices developed. As we study four of them, we learn of the beginnings of some wrong teachings which we find today. These are not necessarily held by any one denomination, but they are wrong teachings:

**A. To be a church member was to be in the kingdom of God.**

One who is in the kingdom of God is a Christian. Some believed that to become a church member was the same as becoming a Christian. This is a wrong teaching. One must first become a Christian by repenting and believing in Jesus. Then he is able to become a church member. Matthew 16:19 was interpreted wrongly. The churches began to think that the entrance into the kingdom was the same as the entrance into the church. They thought that

whoever they admitted as a church member was also admitted into the kingdom of God. The church left the teachings found in the New Testament when they made this mistake. Christians hold the gospel which is the key to the kingdom of heaven. They do not hold salvation for others but only hold the "key." Believers must tell them about Jesus. One should be born again into the kingdom of God before becoming a church member.

B. To be baptized was to become a Christian.

The first wrong teaching led to another. The second wrong teaching was that to be baptized was to become a Christian. This mistake came also from a wrong interpretation of Matthew 16:19. The way of becoming a church member was by being baptized. If baptism was the door to the church, then they thought it was the "key." Therefore, whoever they baptized became a part of the kingdom of God. Because of this wrong teaching, some believed that baptism could save even a new born child. This is the thinking of many people today, but the New Testament does not teach this. The New Testament teaches that each person is saved through his faith and by the grace of God.

C. To be a priest (or pastor) was to be over the members.

The third mistake was that the priest or pastor was over the members. The pastor was responsible for baptizing those coming into the church. He baptized the people, led in the Lord's supper and conducted the worship services. The members believed that he must be more holy than they were. The laying on of hands which we read about in the book of Acts was developed into a wrong teaching on ordination. This taught that ordination was the way the pastors received special grace from God. This separated the pastor from the church members. After some years of this teaching, even the pastors themselves were divided into different levels of offices and power.

D. To follow a church council decision was the same as following the New Testament teachings.

We see the third mistake continuing in other teachings. Because the church leaders were both ordained and educated, the members accepted their teachings. These leaders used their authority over the churches. From time to time, the church leaders would meet together. These meetings were called church councils. Most people believed that these councils or meetings had authority over what the Christians were to believe and practice. Some believed that the decisions of the councils held the same authority as the teachings found in the New Testament. The councils made

many good decisions. However, there were abuses. These abuses finally led to what is called "the Protestant Reformation." Those who opposed these abuses were called reformers. They wanted to correct the mistakes. The reformers wanted to return to the teachings of the New Testament. Because of traditions at the time, they did not do this completely.

### **3. What Is The Believer's Authority or Guide for Faith and Customs?**

We must decide what will be our final authority in faith and customs. Some believe in reason or the ideas of men. Governments are generally based upon the ideas of men. Ideas of men change and so do governments. Others follow their feelings as the guide for their faith. Feelings can change from one day to the next. A few will accept the decisions of the church councils. We have seen that these can be wrong decisions. All of these are important. However, they are not dependable enough to be the final authority in our faith.

Baptists believe that the New Testament is the only dependable foundation for a believer's beliefs and customs. Only the Bible does not change. All of the others depend upon men, but the Scriptures were given to us by God. God's spirit led men to write his message to us. Baptists accept the Bible as God's Word. Christians interpret the Old Testament knowing that Jesus was its fulfilment. We believe that if a church obeys the teachings of the New Testament, then it is a New Testament church. If it does not, then it is not. The New Testament is our guide in faith and customs.

### **4. Is the Source of Church Unity Spiritual or Physical?**

Unity is important in Africa. Unity comes through families. When a member of a family marries a member of another family, these families consider themselves joined together. There is a feeling of physical relationship. However, this relationship is really spiritual.

The same is true for churches. The unity of the church is spiritual not physical. Many families are related physically, but they do not have unity. Churches have members who are not related physically, but these churches have a real unity. Their unity is in their relationship with Jesus. We cannot be related to Jesus physically, but we can be related to him in spirit.

Churches relate to other churches the same way church members relate to each other. As in a family, each member is free to do what he thinks is best. However, because he is part of the family, he also does what is best for the family. Church members are free to do the Lord's will and what is best for the church. Each church is free to do what they believe the Lord's will to be. Our unity comes through doing God's will together.

### **5. What is the History of the Baptists?**

There have been many groups of Christians from the time of the New Testament. Some of these have believed several New Testament teachings that Baptists teach. However, the first church to use the name, Baptist, began in Holland in 1609. The members of this church were religious refugees from England. They had gone to Holland because of the religious freedom there. In the late 1500's and early 1600's, there was a revival in England. The king of England had separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church. Some members believed the changes had not been enough. They wanted to use only the Bible as their guide. Others did not want the church and government to be one. They wanted the congregation to govern itself. Those who formed the first church called Baptist came from these groups. They believed that each believer can be led of God. God's Word was the only true guide, and salvation was by faith alone. They baptized believers by immersion. The church was governed by the members themselves. They believed strongly in religious freedom. They refused to accept the baptism of babies. They baptized every believer who had not been baptized by immersion as a believer. This practice led others to call them, Baptists.

Archbishop Lud of the Church of England wanted unity of beliefs in England. He wanted only one church in the country, the Church of England. He opposed religious freedom. He wanted only one way of belief in one denomination. Baptists and others who desired religious freedom sought refuge in the Americas.

In the United States, after independence, the principle of freedom of worship was established. The Bill of Rights became a part of the Constitution of the United States. Baptists encouraged the passage of the Bill of Rights because it was what they taught. This Bill of Rights and its section on freedom of worship influenced the Charter of the United Nations. As a result, the constitutions of many newly independent countries have historic Baptist beliefs.

Baptist churches work together in associations with other Baptist churches that are near them. They work in conventions or unions in a nation. Many national groups of Baptists work with Baptist groups of other nations through the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). The BWA, in 1980, had 115 national Baptist groups as members. There were over 30 million Baptists in these groups. There are over a million Baptists in Africa. The number of Baptists is growing every week. Baptists are found in nearly every country of Africa.

## **6. What Have We Studied About Baptists in Christian History?**

1. Churches in the New Testament taught that Jesus is Lord and that salvation is by faith alone. They practised baptism of believers by immersion and mature church membership.

2. After the New Testament was written, the following wrong teachings began:

To be a church member was to be in the kingdom of God;  
To be baptized was to become a Christian;  
To be a priest was to be over the members; and  
To follow the church councils was the same as following the New Testament.

3. Only the New Testament has the authority to be the guide for a Christian's faith and customs.

4. Baptists believe that unity comes by a spiritual relationship with Jesus and other Christians but not by a physical organization. It is by choice.

5. Baptists from their beginning have sought to be New Testament Christians by following the teachings of the New Testament.

**"DOCTRINAL BASIS  
FOR THE  
BAPTIST UNION OF NEW ZEALAND**

(1) The inspiration of the Bible and its authority in all matters of faith and practice.

(2) The true humanity and Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) The atonement of our Lord on the Cross for the sins of the world.

(4) Salvation by faith in Christ alone.

(5) Membership in the Christian Church for the regenerate.

(6) The immersion of believers as the only scriptural form of baptism.

Subject to its acceptance of the foregoing Articles of Faith every church in membership with the Union shall have liberty to interpret and administer the laws of Christ and to govern its own affairs." 1

This is an example of Baptists' belief and desire to follow the New Testament teachings.

1 Lumpkin, William L. Baptist Confessions of Faith. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1959

**OUTLINE**  
**CHAPTER TWO**

- 1. How Did The Church Begin?**
  - A. The Church is the result of the New Covenant.
  - B. Christ is the foundation of the Church.
- 2. What Is the Meaning of the Word, Church?**
  - A. How was the word, church, first used?
  - B. How is the word, church, used in the New Testament?
  - C. What does the word, church, mean to Baptists?
- 3. What New Testament Terms for the Church Show the Trinity?**
  - A. The Church is the "People of God."
  - B. The Church is the "Body of Christ."
  - C. The Church is the "Fellowship of the Holy Spirit."
- 4. Is a Church an Organization as Well as a Spiritual Body?**
- 5. Has the Church Grown?**
- 6. What Have We Studied About the New Testament Church?**

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Baptists believe that a New Testament church is one which follows New Testament teachings. How did the church begin? What is the meaning of the word, church? How is church used in the New Testament? What do Baptists believe about a church? What are some New Testament terms that show us the nature of the church? How does the church show us the nature of God? We will want to answer these questions in this chapter.

The church is important. Christ gave himself to begin the church. The word "church" does not mean a building. A church is a body of redeemed people.

#### 1. How Did The Church Begin?

##### A. The Church is the result of the new covenant.

The roots of Christianity go deep into the Hebrew faith. The Hebrews lived under the old covenant. Jeremiah told of a new covenant that God would write upon the hearts of his people (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The writer of Hebrews writes about Jesus beginning this new covenant. Through the giving of his life, Jesus gave the blood for the new covenant. "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Hebrews 9:15).

##### B. Christ is the foundation of the Church.

Jesus established the new covenant. He is the foundation, the cornerstone, of the Church. Paul said, "For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). Peter tells us, "...The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (1 Peter 2:7). Jesus asked his disciples who he was. Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Jesus replied, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus was referring to himself and the confession of Peter. The Church is built upon Jesus Christ.

## **2. What Is the Meaning of the word, Church?**

### **A. How was the word "church" first used?**

The meaning of the Greek word translated "church" means "to call out or to call together." Church is used to describe the assembly or congregation in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The word began in Athens. It was the assembly of all its free citizens. They were the governing body of the city. To us it means all who have been called together to worship and serve God. Also the meaning shows that a church should govern itself.

### **B. How is the word "church" used in the New Testament?**

The word has two meanings in the New Testament. First, it means a spiritual body which includes all Christians. This means all Christians of all times and all places. Some speak of this as the universal Church. Whenever the word is spelled with a capital "C," it is referring to this body of believers. However, the word is not used many times with this meaning. Second, it means a local church. These local churches usually met in homes of Christians. Over 90% of the times used in the New Testament, "church" refers to the local church.

### **C. What does the word "church" mean to Baptists?**

Fifty Baptist leaders wrote a statement of faith called the Baptist Faith and Message. They say this about a church.

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of Baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.

This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.

The New Testament speaks also of the Church which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.

### 3. What New Testament Terms for the Church Show the Trinity?

There are at least 35 terms for the Church in the New Testament. Here we will consider only three which show the trinity. These show the spiritual nature of the Church. We see this spiritual nature in a local church.

#### A. The Church is the "People of God."

Peter quoted from Exodus 19 to show that Christians are now the people of God. **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"** (1 Peter 2:9). This describes the Church—a people with a new nature and a great responsibility. It describes the nature of God who gives freedom and responsibility to those whom he calls from darkness into light.

#### B. The Church is the "Body of Christ."

Paul wrote in Colossians 1:18, **"He (Christ) is the head of the body, the church....."** We refer to the Church as the body of Christ. The Church lives because of what Christ Jesus has done for it. The Church is a spiritual body. Without Christ as the head, the Church would not have life or direction. As the body of Christ, we depend upon Christ and each other.

#### C. The Church is the "Fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

Fellowship in the New Testament means more than having a cup of tea with someone. Fellowship means a mutual bond between two or more people because of following Jesus together. We seek to serve and glorify God. We are in fellowship with the Holy Spirit because this is his desire for us. Jesus said, **"He (the Holy Spirit) will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you"** (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit's presence is necessary in salvation. He stays with us to give us power for service and to direct our actions. He does this to glorify Jesus as the anointed of God.

### 4. Is a Church an Organization as well as a Spiritual Body?

Yes, a church must also be organized. In the New Testament, a church had a simple organization. There was enough organization to reach their goal of making disciples. They began using deacons to organize the work more efficiently. They organized the sending of the missionaries whom the Holy Spirit had called. This is a good principle in organization. You need no more organization than necessary to accomplish God's will. A body must have structure. It

also must have life. For example, if your body had no bones, it could not stand or move. If you had no head, you could not live. You must have both. While the spiritual life is the more important, we should also be concerned about the organization of the church.

### **5. Has the Church Grown?**

The Church has grown from a few disciples to millions of believers today. This is because of the Holy Spirit's leadership and his power in the lives of the believers. When believers allow the Holy Spirit to control their lives, he is able to use them effectively. When they try to control churches and Christians, the witness is not strong. The spread of the Gospel in the book of Acts was the work of the Holy Spirit. Those who received the gospel at Pentecost returned home to share what they had received. The churches at Antioch and Rome were started like this. Believers should allow the Holy Spirit to help them take the gospel to their homes.

### **6. What Have We Studied About the New Testament Church?**

1. The Church has been established by God, is dependent upon Christ and is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

2. A church is open to all who by faith give their lives to God for his control.

3. A church is stronger because it is both unified and different.

4. A church is responsible to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. A local church is a revelation of the body of Christ in a community in which all Christians should be a part.

## STARTING NEW CHURCHES IS IMPORTANT

A school teacher in Africa had a deep concern for people. He developed a special team plan to start new churches. More than 3,000 people were converted and baptized. Over sixty new churches were started. This school teacher now gives full time to starting churches and training leaders. He believes that growing is the first and major task of the church...

Why should we start new churches? The Bible is full of reasons! "Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). The Church is Christ's plan for making disciples, teaching the faith and reaching out to win the world....

What is a church? A church is a group of Christian believers who worship and work together according to the pattern of the New Testament....

Churches are being started by leaders who have a strong desire to share the Good News of Christ. A church is born as more and more people come to Christ by repentance and faith. Then these new believers begin the wondrous process of Christian growth. They live in fellowship with God and care for one another. The believers serve Christ as His stewards and His witnesses. Eventually this new church will be able to reproduce itself by helping to start another new church.

God's purpose is that churches should grow. This is how He reconciles the world to Himself and gathers a people of His own (II Cor. 5:19 and I Peter 2:9-10). God's purpose is that all things be brought together in Christ (Eph. 1:10) and that people receive abundant life (John 4:13-14). As churches grow the Good News is communicated (Acts 1:8) and the flock of God is served (Acts 20:28). All of these amazing things happen when people are brought to Christ and new churches started. 2

2 Harold Cummins, Starting New Churches, (Nairobi: Baptist Publications House, 1980), pp. 7-8.

**OUTLINE**  
**CHAPTER THREE**

- 1. What Type of Church Does a Community Need?**
  - A. A church which has members who have been saved
  - B. A church which has a ministry like the ministry of Jesus
  - C. A church which has spiritual power
  
- 2. What Is the Purpose of a Church?**
  - A. The purpose of Jesus
  - B. The command of Jesus: make disciples
  - C. The apostles: men who followed the command of Jesus
  
- 3. What Is a Ministry of Evangelism?**
  - A. Evangelism defined
  - B. Evangelism proven
  - C. Evangelism's principles
  
- 4. What Is a Ministry of Edification?**
  - A. Edification defined
  - B. Edification methods
  - C. Edification's principles
  
- 5. Should a Church Evaluate Or Examine Its Ministry?**
  
- 6. What Have We Studied About the Purpose of a Church?**

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PURPOSE OF A CHURCH

What type of a church does a community need? What is the purpose of a church? What is the ministry of evangelism? What is the ministry of edification or strengthening others in the faith? Can a church evaluate or examine its ministry?

A local church has a purpose which Christ gave ---- to make disciples. A community needs a church that believes this purpose is important.

#### 1. What Type of Church Does a Community Need?

A. A church which has members who have been saved

A community needs a church with members who have been saved. A church, as the people of God, must require that a person be saved before becoming a member. A church is to be an example of the difference that God makes in a believer's life.

B. A church which has a ministry like the ministry of Jesus

A church, as the body of Christ, should serve the community as Jesus did. As a body, the church is a serving people. A church is to seek ways to minister in the name of Jesus Christ. If a church is to help its community, it must do more than what the members can do in their own strength. A church must allow the Holy Spirit to help them to become servants under his power and control.

C. A church which has spiritual power

A church is a fellowship that has the power of God. A Church which has spiritual power is one which is controlled by Christ through his Spirit. Its members are messengers of salvation to the community. Christ uses them to bring the power of God into the lives of others.

#### 2. What Is the Purpose of a Church?

The purpose of a church is the same as the purpose of Jesus. His purpose is seen in his life, his ministry and his commands. The apostles are examples of men who followed the command of Jesus.

### **A. The purpose of Jesus**

Jesus is the Son of God. He became human in order that people could have new life. He came to establish the new covenant. Jesus is the most perfect revelation of God. When a person asks what God is like he needs only to look at Jesus and his life. Jesus shows us the nature of the Heavenly Father. Philip asked Jesus "...Lord, show us the Father..." Jesus replied, "...He who has seen me has seen the Father...I am in the Father and the Father is in me..." (John 14:8-11). He is the way of redemption. Men were in slavery to sin and death. Jesus paid the price for man's freedom from sin. Through faith in Jesus, the believers have been set free. They must show the love of God to others as he has done for them.

### **B. The command of Jesus: make disciples**

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commands Christians to make disciples. This involves two works—evangelism and edification. In evangelism, a Christian is to share his testimony of what Jesus has done for him. Edification means "to strengthen or to build-up." In edification, a Christian is to teach and train or disciple a new believer. He is to help the new believer grow to maturity in the faith. Evangelism comes before edification. However, evangelism is not complete until a person is a mature disciple. A mature disciple is able to win and teach someone else.

### **C. The apostles: men who followed the command of Jesus**

The book of Acts is exciting to read. The apostles were ordinary men. They had problems. They were tempted. At the close of the Gospels, they had run away. However, in Acts the Holy Spirit, who came at Pentecost, gave them power. They were real witnesses. We read about them starting churches and leading people to Jesus. The many books following Acts are letters to some of the churches. These churches wanted to do the work of Jesus.

## **3. What is a Ministry of Evangelism?**

### **A. Definition of Evangelism**

Evangelism means "to tell others about Jesus Christ." Evangelism is helping others accept Jesus as their Lord. Evangelism is the work of all Christians, both as individuals and as a group such as a church. They are to share the message of salvation with those who do not know Jesus. A Christian can share the gospel in many ways. He can tell others about what Jesus has done for him. He can proclaim or preach the gospel. He can talk to others about who Jesus is. He can discuss with others the meaning of the Christian faith.

## **B. Proof for Evangelism**

The life of a witness should prove that he has been changed. If it does not, it can prevent others from accepting Christ. One pastor had a problem with a woman. She had lived with more than one man. She was living with a man who was not the father of her child. There had not been either a traditional or a Christian wedding. She wanted to testify before the church. She became very angry. What would you do if you were her pastor?

Every area of a Christian's life needs to prove that he has been changed. This must show in his business affairs, with his family, in his community and even in church. His life must show the love, honesty and power of the Christian faith.

## **C. Principles of Evangelism**

1) A church has the responsibility for sharing the gospel in its community.

2) The actions and spirit of a church can help or hinder the witness of a member.

3) The work of evangelism is done in a community more than in a church building.

4) A church should identify those who are called and gifted for the work of evangelism.

5) New believers should be brought into the life of a church as soon as possible.

## **4. What Is a Ministry of Edification?**

### **A. Definition of Edification**

To edify means "to teach, to educate, to build-up, to strengthen." This ministry is for those who have become believers. It is a ministry directed to the church, while evangelism is directed to the non-Christians. Churches need to be strengthened in the faith just as individuals do.

## B. Methods of Edification

Building up the faith in Christians can be done in several ways by the churches. The worship service is very important. Worship should be planned and orderly. It should include singing, prayers, offerings, testimonies and the reading and preaching of God's Word. Testimony, however, should be limited to what Christ has done recently in one's life. While the length of a service is (or should be) limited, all of these things can be done. Care should be taken to prevent any one person or group from using all of the time available. For example, a choir should not sing so many long songs that someone else is prevented from sharing. The worship leader or pastor is responsible to direct the service in such a way that people will not be prevented from worshipping God. The leader must consider the whole group, not just an individual person and his desires.

A church, if it is to grow in the faith, must have a program of teaching the Bible to all of its members. This is not just for children. If a church succeeds in reaching adults, the children will come as well. The pastor should train others to teach. He also must be willing to learn. A church will only mature to the level of its leaders.

## C. Principles of Edification

- 1) Each Christian must learn the Word of God and how to apply it to his life.
- 2) Each Christian needs to discover and develop his spiritual gift or gifts.
- 3) Each church needs to provide opportunity for the members to have a meaningful worship experience.
- 4) Each church needs to prepare its members for service.

## 5. Should a Church Evaluate Or Examine Its Ministry?

Can a church's ministry be evaluated or examined? Should it be evaluated? Yes, a church should evaluate or examine its ministry. To do this a church should ask two basic questions. Are we winning people in the community to Christ? Are we helping Christians to mature in the faith? If one or both of these are answered no, then the church should pray and seek God's guidance and power to become the church it is supposed to be.

## **6. What Have We Studied About the Purpose of a Church?**

1. Every community needs a church whose members have been saved, which has a ministry like that of Jesus and which has spiritual power.

2. The purpose of a church, through the leadership and power of Holy Spirit, is to fulfil the command of Jesus to make disciples.

3. Evangelism is telling others about Jesus. Every Christian is responsible for evangelism.

4. Edification is helping Christians to grow in the faith. This is the responsibility of a church and mature Christians.

5. A church should evaluate its ministry regularly.

**OUTLINE**  
**CHAPTER FOUR**

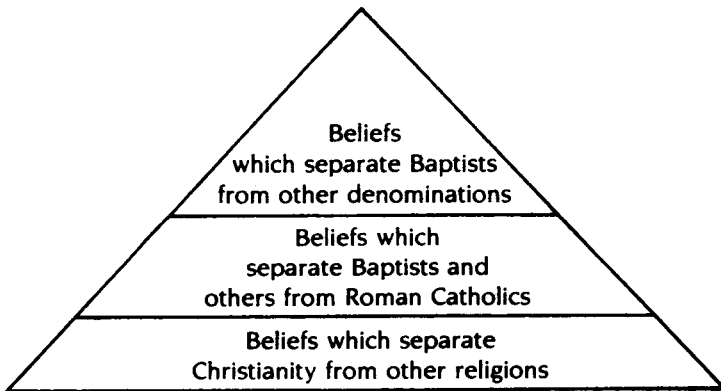
- 1. Which Beliefs Separate Christianity From Other Religions?**
  - A. Incarnation and atonement
  - B. Salvation in Jesus Christ alone
  - C. Scriptures
  
- 2. Which Beliefs Separate Baptists and Others From Roman Catholics?**
  - A. Scriptures alone as the believer's final authority
  - B. Justification by faith
  - C. Priesthood of the believer
  
- 3. Which Beliefs Separate Baptists From Other Denominations?**
  - A. Lordship of Jesus Christ
  - B. Faith
  - C. Baptism
  - D. Fellowship
  - E. Freedom
  - F. Evangelism
  
- 4. What Have We Studied About Basic Baptist Beliefs?**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BASIC BAPTIST BELIEFS

There are many Christian denominations today. What a group believes is shown in what it does. Some denominations believe as Baptists about many things. However, they do not practice their beliefs as Baptists.

Let us look at the beliefs which separate Baptists from other religions, from Roman Catholics and from other denominations.



#### 1. Which Beliefs Separate Christianity From Other Religions?

##### A. Incarnation and atonement

The incarnation and atonement are important beliefs for the Christian. They cannot be separated from each other. Atonement was made possible by the death of Christ on the cross. Because of the incarnation, the sacrificial death of Christ has meaning. Without the atonement for sin, the incarnation would have been meaningless.

##### 1) Incarnation means God became man.

Most religions of the world--Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and others--respect Jesus. They say that he was a good teacher, a holy man or even a prophet. However, the Christian belief is that Jesus was both God and man. God in his love chose this way to bring man to himself. Man was separated from God. The blood of goats and cows was not strong enough to cleanse him of his sins. There-

fore, God became flesh through the birth of Jesus. Jesus was born by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a teaching which people in some other religions do not accept. For a person to be Christian, one must believe in the incarnation. All Christian churches believe this truth. John calls Jesus the Word. **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father"** (John 1:14).

2) Atonement is the work which Jesus Christ did to bring man into fellowship with God.

Every person is a sinner. His sin kept him from God. It is impossible for a man to remove his own sin. **"It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins"** (Hebrews 10:4). Because of the incarnation, the sacrifice of Jesus was perfect and powerful. **"...The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7). This is the work of atonement that Christ did for sinful man. He gave himself in order that man might have a way to come to God. By faith the believer accepts Jesus to be his Lord. Jesus' blood cleanses man from his sin. Jesus is then man's High Priest in heaven. He knows and cares about the problems of his followers, because he was both God and man.

#### B. Salvation in Jesus Christ alone

There is only one way of salvation, according to the Bible. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Each man must repent of his sins and believe in Jesus. Christians believe Jesus when he said, **"...I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me"** (John 14:6). In Acts 4:12 Peter said, **"...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."** Salvation is in Jesus Christ alone. He made the atonement for sin by his death and resurrection. People of other religions believe a person can be saved in other ways. Christians believe salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

#### C. Scriptures

Christians accept the 66 books of the Bible as God's Word. The Scriptures separate Christians from Jews who do not accept the New Testament. The Scriptures also separate Christians from following Islam which accepts the Koran. The Hindus have writings which they believe are holy. Most traditional religions follow customs instead of any writings.

## **2. Which Beliefs Separate Baptists and Others from Roman Catholics?**

There are three important New Testament doctrines. These are the doctrines which the reformers wanted the Roman Catholic Church to accept. The reformers were those who wanted to return to the doctrines of the New Testament.

### **A. Scriptures alone are the believer's final authority.**

The Church, at the time of the Reformation, had some non-biblical customs. These had begun because of the belief that the decisions of Bishops and the Church Councils were the same as the Scriptures. While many good decisions had been made, there were mistakes as well. Baptists and other denominations accept the Scriptures alone as their final authority.

Baptists do not believe that any statement by any person or group can have the same authority as Scripture. All decisions, statements or customs must agree with Scripture. If they do not, then they should not be accepted or followed. However, some people want to put books or statements written by men along side of God's Word. Some want to make their experience or feelings as important as the Bible. There are many good books which can help people to understand the Bible, but no other book is God's Holy Word. The final authority must be God's Word.

When a Christian interprets the Scriptures, he does so as a believer in Jesus Christ. His belief in Jesus and understanding of the New Testament helps him to interpret the Old Testament. The Scriptures, the believer's final authority, help people to understand their experiences and feelings.

### **B. Justification by faith**

The Church, at the time of the Reformation, was teaching that salvation was received by doing certain things. This was a problem for Martin Luther and other preachers. Luther helped others to accept Paul's statement, "...we are justified by faith..." (Romans 5:1). Justify means "to be declared righteous." Because of the believer's faith, God has declared him righteous. Baptists believe that one is made right before God only by faith. Man is a sinner by nature. He is unable to save himself. He must be changed. God is able to change a person because of that person's faith in Jesus. Therefore, salvation depends upon God not man.

A person who is saved is secure in his salvation. This is because of the nature and character of God. Salvation depends upon God both to save and keep the believer. Man is not able to save himself or even to keep his salvation once he has it. This is done through the power of God. Salvation is always the work of God's grace through the believer's faith in Jesus Christ.

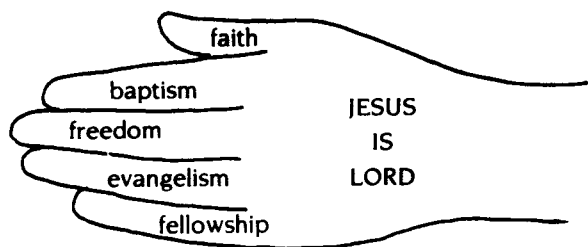
### C. Priesthood of the believer

All Christians are priests before God. They can pray directly to God for themselves and for others. The division between the members and leaders lost this New Testament doctrine. The church members were called "laity." Laity comes from a Greek word meaning "people." The priests were called "clergy." Clergy, also from the Greek, means, "calling, vocation, station in life." However, both of these words refer to ALL Christians in the New Testament. All Christians are God's people and have been called into his service. In the spiritual body of Christ, there are no divisions. A pastor is respected because of his wisdom and maturity in the faith. However, he is NOT better than the members. He is NOT their way to God. He is NOT the only one to whom God will listen or speak. All Christians are to pray, to serve, to grow in the faith, to study, to witness and to give. God wants all of his people to know him, to talk to him and to do his will.

Baptists believe this teaching very strongly. A person is able, under God, to make right decisions in his spiritual life. Each Christian is a priest. The priesthood is all the priests. Therefore, every believer is a member of the priesthood. The priesthood is not limited to a special few.

### 3. Which Beliefs Separate Baptists from Other Denominations?

At Regents Park College, a Baptist college in England, there is a symbol which indicates these Baptist principles. There the symbol was a star. Here the principles are shown on a hand.



### **A. Lordship of Jesus Christ**

The New Testament teaches the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:9-11). This is the foundation of Baptists' beliefs. Jesus is the one who saves. His Spirit gives power. Jesus must be Lord in every area of life. He must control the believer. His Spirit leads in all truth and wisdom. As one walks in faith, the Lord gives him the ability to know his will. The believer is able to decide what God's will is for his life. Baptists preach and teach these things about Jesus:

- 1) Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 4:14-15).
- 2) The atoning work of Jesus is sufficient for the salvation of all who believe in Him (Romans 5).
- 3) Jesus is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12).
- 4) All beliefs and customs must follow his teachings written in the New Testament (1 Timothy 6:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; Revelation 1:2).

### **B. Faith**

The New Testament teaches a personal salvation experience by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). One is made right before God by faith in Jesus as Lord. This is justification by faith. A person must confess his sinfulness and tell others that Jesus is his Lord. One is not a Christian by accident. He must make a wilful and public choice. He becomes a Christian only by faith. Baptists preach and teach these things about salvation by faith:

- 1) Only a person's faith qualifies him for salvation. (Romans 3:22-28; 5:1)
- 2) A person is saved by God's grace (Ephesians 1:7; 2:8).
  - a. Salvation begins with God, not with man (John 6:65; Matthew 16:17).
  - b. Salvation is secure because it has always depended upon God (Ephesians 1:13-14; Titus 3:7; 1 Peter 1:5).
- 3) A believer receives the Holy Spirit when he is saved (Ephesians 1:13; Romans 8:9).
- 4) Only a person who has been saved should be a church member (Acts 2:41, 47).

### C. Baptism

The New Testament churches baptized believers by immersion (Acts 2:41; 8:38; 10:47). Baptists insist upon this scriptural example. Baptists immerse only those who make a public statement accepting Jesus as Lord. We have studied about baptism in chapter one, and we will study more in chapter five. Baptists preach and teach these things about baptism:

- 1) New Testament baptism is by immersion (Acts 8:38; Romans 6:3-4).
  - a. To baptize means "to put under water or immerse."
  - b. Only immersion shows the death, burial and resurrection of a person in Jesus Christ.
- 2) New Testament baptism is of believers only (Acts 10:47).
  - a. Baptism is an act of obedience.
  - b. Baptism is not a work for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- 3) New Testament baptism of the believer is necessary for church membership (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41).
- 4) The authority to baptize belongs to the church not the pastor (See chapter seven).

### D. Fellowship

The New Testament teaches that a church is a spiritual fellowship. A Baptist church is an organized fellowship of baptized believers (Acts 2:41; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 1:2). Following Jesus brings fellowship. A church is the fellowship of the people of God. It is the body of Christ working for his purpose. A church is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit glorifying God. Members of a Baptist church should have confessed Jesus as Lord and been baptized. A Christian should join a church that believes as he believes. It is not Christian to join a church in order to change it from one denomination to another. Baptists preach and teach these things about a church:

- 1) A church is a local, organized fellowship of baptized believers (Acts 2:41-47; 20:17).
- 2) As a spiritual body, the church is a fellowship of Christians who are equal before God (1 Corinthians 12:14-20; Romans 12:3-6).

- 3) A church is to glorify Jesus in its worship and ministries (John 16:14; Acts 2:42-47).
- 4) The fellowship of believers needs the spiritual gifts of every member (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11).
- 5) The fellowship, under the Lord, is responsible for its membership (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).

#### E. Freedom

The New Testament teaches that there is freedom with responsibility in Christ Jesus (John 8:36; Luke 12:47-48; Romans 6:17-18). Freedom brings responsibility. A person is never free to do as he pleases. If Christians did this, there would be no order or stability in the church. A person is free to accept or to reject Jesus. God gives the freedom of choice to man. He must use that freedom with wisdom. The doctrine of the priesthood of the believer teaches the truth. Baptist churches practice this truth. The members under the leadership of Christ are free to decide what God's will is for the church. Baptist churches work together in associations and conventions or unions. The members of these groups are also under the leadership of Christ. They are free to decide what God's will is for that group. However, one group is not free to decide what God's will is for another group. They cannot require another Christian or church to do something he or it chooses not to do. Baptists respect the freedom of others. They believe others must accept responsibility for their actions. Baptists preach and teach these things about freedom:

- 1) God gives every person the freedom of choice (Joshua 24:15).
- 2) Freedom always requires responsibility (Romans 6:12-23; 1 Peter 2:16; Luke 12:47-48).
- 3) All relationships in and with a church are freely chosen (1 Corinthians 16:16; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:13).
- 4) The Holy Spirit is able to lead every Christian in the faith (Romans 8:14-17).

#### F. Evangelism

The New Testament teaches the need to share the Good News with those without Christ (Acts 1:8). Baptists have concern

for every person who does not know Christ as Saviour. They believe that every Christian has a responsibility as an evangelist. The Holy Spirit gives to believers the boldness to be witnesses.

Baptists believe in missions. Missions means going or sending a person to preach the gospel to those without Christ. Baptists start new preaching points and fellowships so others can know Jesus. They want to share the blessings, joy and love they have found in Jesus. Christians are responsible for sending missionaries. They can have a plan of cooperation among the churches through associations and conventions. Each church can share in this by giving regularly through the association and convention. These groups can send missionaries to areas that do not have any churches. Baptists preach and teach these things about evangelism:

- 1) Every believer is an evangelist and a witness for Jesus (Acts 1:8; 1 John 5:10-12).
- 2) The Holy Spirit gives boldness to witness (Acts 4:13, 31).
- 3) A church is responsible for telling its community about Jesus (Acts 19:10).
- 4) The church is responsible for missions in other communities (Acts 13:1-4; 3 John 6-8).

#### **4. What Have We Studied About Basic Baptist Beliefs?**

1. Jesus was God, and salvation is by faith in him alone.
2. The Bible is the guide for the believer's faith and actions.
3. Baptism of believers by immersion is scriptural.
4. Church members should have equality and brotherhood.
5. God gives freedom with responsibility to everyone.
6. All Christians are responsible for missions and evangelism.

## "THE BIBLE IS BAPTISTS' AUTHORITY FOR FAITH

The Bible has two large divisions. The first division is composed of the first 39 books of the Bible and is called the Old Testament. It was written before Jesus was born. The second division is composed of the last 27 books of the Bible, and it is called the New Testament. It was after the earthly ministry of Jesus.

The Bible is an old book. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, was written about 1500 years before Jesus was born. The Revelation, the last book of the Bible, was written about 100 years after the birth of Jesus. We see that these 66 books were written over a period of about 1500 years. The last book of the Bible was written nearly 2000 years ago. Yes, the Bible is an old book, but we will find that its message is still as true today as when it was written. It will remain true through all the years to come...

Now think about the Bible. The 66 books of the Bible were written over a period of about 1500 years by approximately 40 different men. Yet, when these 66 books are fitted together, they tell one story of God, His love, and His way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Since the Bible was written over this long period of time by many different men, we know that it was God who told each man the things which he should write. Because God was the One teaching them the things which they should write, each part fits with the other parts to make this complete story about God. Although the Bible has many different books, it is one book and it has one true author--God Himself. This is what we mean by the unity of the Bible. The very fact that the Bible has this unity causes us to believe that it is true...

God gave the Bible to all people. The Bible is not a book for any one country or race of people. The Old Testament was written first in Hebrew. The New Testament was written first in the Greek language. Later they were translated into other languages..."<sup>3</sup>

3 Tom Small, Baptists Beliefs, (Nairobi: Baptist Publishing House, 1977), pp. 1-4.

## OUTLINE CHAPTER FIVE

1. **Which Word Should We Use—Sacraments or Ordinances?**
  - A. What is the meaning of the word, "sacrament?"
  - B. What is the meaning of the word, "ordinance?"
  - C. Baptists believe that only baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances.
  
2. **What Do Baptists Believe About Baptism?**
  - A. Was there baptism before Christian baptism?
  - B. What is Christian baptism?
    - 1) New Testament baptism is baptism of believers only.
    - 2) New Testament baptism is by immersion in water.
    - 3) New Testament baptism is a witness of new life in Christ.
  
3. **What Do Baptists Believe About the Lord's Supper?**
  - A. The Lord's Supper gives new meaning to the Passover Meal.
  - B. What do Baptists teach about the Lord's Supper?
    - 1) The Lord's Supper is for Christians only.
    - 2) The Lord's Supper is a symbol with a great truth.
    - 3) The Lord's Supper is a meal of remembrance.
    - 4) The Lord's Supper is a time of worship.
  
4. **Who Controls the Ordinances?**
  - A. The final authority over the ordinances is Christ.
  - B. The ordinances should be controlled by the local church.
  
5. **What Policies Should the Church Have for the Ordinances?**
  - A. These are suggestions for policies on baptism.
    - 1) The church should baptize all who become Christians.
    - 2) The church should baptize only those who have confessed Christ.
    - 3) The church should baptize all believers who are not scripturally baptized.
  - B. These are suggestions for policies on the Lord's Supper.
    - 1) The church should allow only Christians to share in the Lord's Supper.
    - 2) The church should decide whom they will invite to share in the Lord's Supper.
    - 3) The church should have the Lord's Supper regularly.
  
6. **What Have We Studied About the Church Ordinances?**

## CHAPTER FIVE CHURCH ORDINANCES

Why do some call baptism and the Lord's Supper sacraments? Why do others call them ordinances? How many ordinances should there be? Which ones should be observed? What is the history of baptism and the Lord's Supper? Who has control over these—the pastor or the church? Baptism and the Lord's Supper are Christian symbols that teach important biblical truths.

### 1. Which Word Should We Use—Sacraments or Ordinances?

#### A. What is the meaning of the word, sacrament?

Sacrament is the word used by some denominations. Sacrament means "sign, pledge or seal." The word was used to mean oath of allegiance or a sacrament. For the early Christians, baptism and the Lord's Supper became the oath of allegiance to Jesus. So, many called them sacraments. However, sacrament as used by the Roman Catholic Church, has a different meaning today. The sacraments are believed to be a way of receiving God's blessing. Some believe that to receive the sacrament is to be made more holy. The Roman Catholic Church has seven sacraments.

#### B. What is the meaning of the word, ordinance?

The word, ordinance, means "a requirement, regulation, commandment, decree." The early churches believed that they had been required to keep these ceremonies. Christians believe baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by God. Therefore, they are called ordinances because they are required by God. They teach very important biblical truths. As teaching ceremonies, the ordinances do not give any special blessing. They testify to the blessings already received. Ordinances are symbols of great truths.

#### C. Baptists accept only baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances.

Baptists use the word ordinance for two reasons. First, a Christian has already received God's grace and blessings. He wants to witness that God's grace and blessings are great. A man cannot earn God's grace. When he deserved judgement, God forgave him. When he deserved punishment, God gave him this grace "...in which we stand..." (Romans 5:2). This grace and forgiveness are free

gifts from God. Second, God has commanded Christians to observe baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are not the traditions of men. Everytime Christians have them in a worship service, they are giving a witness. They are showing others what God has done for them. They remember their blessings in Christ.

The early churches had only baptism and the Lord's Supper. The church councils added five more through the years. Some groups practice foot washing. At least one denomination keeps none. Baptist churches accept only baptism and the Lord's Supper. Why only these two? Only these two testify to the basic truth of the gospel. They remind the believers of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the good news of what Christ did for us. He is the way of salvation.

## **2. What Do Baptists Believe About Baptism?**

(Matthew 28:19-20; John 3:22-23; Acts 2:42; 10:47; Romans 6:1-11)

### **A. Was there baptism before Christian baptism?**

The Jews baptized Gentiles who had become followers of the Jewish faith. Their baptism had two purposes. One was to guard the door of Judaism. The other was to teach the believer the importance of his decision. They would read the commandments over him. Then the person would put himself completely under water. The method of baptism is known as se-baptism or self baptism. From this, we find three important teachings. One, those baptized were only those who knew the importance of their decision. Two, a definite decision of faith came before baptism. Three, immersion of a person completely in water showed one's total commitment to his new faith.

The baptism of John the Baptist was like Jewish baptism in two ways. First, only those who heard and accepted God's message were baptized. Second, his baptism was one of complete immersion in water. However, there are three ways in which his baptism was different. One, John baptized Jews. John did not believe that being born of Jewish parents made a person a true follower of God. Two, John was the one who baptized. A person did not baptize himself. Three, John's baptism was a sign or symbol of repentance and forgiveness of sin.

### **B. What is Christian baptism?**

1) New Testament baptism is baptism of believers only.

Baptism is a symbol showing what has happened in the life of the person being baptized. Baptism does not save a person. The New Testament teaches that only believers were baptized. This was what the New Testament churches did. This is true Christian baptism. Baptists practice believer's baptism.

2) New Testament baptism is by immersion in water.

The Greek word, baptizo, which means "immersion," came into the English language in an interesting way. King James of England had the Bible translated into the English language. He was also the head of the Church of England. Their baptism is by sprinkling. Instead of translating the word, the translators decided to bring it over from the Greek language. Therefore, we have the word, baptism, instead of immersion. In Jewish faith and in the New Testament churches, baptism was by immersion.

3) New Testament baptism is a witness of new life in Christ

A person is usually baptized before witnesses. They are witnesses of his commitment to Jesus. By being baptized, he is showing his faith. Baptism by immersion is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism shows that a person has died to sin, buried the old nature and has been raised to new life. A new believer testifies in his baptism to his obedience, dedication and unity with Christ. Baptists seek to baptize only those who already have new life in Christ.

### 3. What Do Baptists Believe About The Lord's Supper? (Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 10:16-22 11:23-32)

A. The Lord's Supper gives new meaning to the Passover meal.

The Passover has been an important day for the Hebrews. On that day, they remember the night of their freedom from bondage in Egypt. Each family eats a meal of remembrance. On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he ate this meal with his disciples. However, he gave new meaning to old symbols. He used the bread as a symbol of his body. The fruit of the vine was the symbol of his blood. The Hebrews were delivered by the body and blood of the lamb. Jesus, the Lamb of God, delivers us from the bondage of sin and death. The blood of a lamb protected the Hebrews from the death angel. The blood of Jesus protects the believers from spiritual death. The lamb took the place of the firstborn sons of Israel. Jesus has taken the believer's place. The meal was only for Hebrews. The Lord's Supper is only for believers. At the meal, they remember the great things God has done.

## **B. What Do Baptists teach about the Lord's Supper?**

### **1) The Lord's Supper is for Christians only.**

Paul tells the Christians that the Lord's Supper should be for believers only. Those who are not Christians do not qualify to share it. They have not accepted Jesus' sacrifice. Therefore, they have no right to sit at his table. The Lord's Supper is for those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord. They have been forgiven and have received God's blessing of eternal life. They are members of the family of God in Christ. Only those should be invited.

### **2) The Lord's Supper is a symbol of a great truth.**

The Lord's Supper is the symbol of the atonement that Christ made for us. This is a very important biblical teaching. Jesus gave his body and his blood for the cleansing of sin. The fruit of the vine and the bread are symbols. There is no magic in them. They remind the believer of the body and blood of Jesus. The Roman Catholics believe that the bread and the wine become the actual body and blood of Christ. Martin Luther said that the bread and wine did not become Christ's body and blood. However, they were present with the bread and wine. Baptists believe the bread and fruit of the vine are symbols of Christ's body and blood. Therefore, they do not give any special blessing to a person. They are symbols of the blessings the believers have already received.

### **3) The Lord's Supper is a meal of remembrance.**

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the gospel message. The Lord's Supper is a meal of remembrance. Whenever Christians have the Lord's Supper, they remember what Jesus has done for them. Christians remember his life, his death and resurrection. They remember all he did for their salvation. They remember his victory over sin and death. Christians remember his promise not to leave them alone in this world. The Holy Spirit is present to help those who believe to overcome sin and temptation. They also remember his promise to return for his people. Therefore, when Christians observe the Lord's Supper, they remember some great teachings of the Bible.

### **4) The Lord's Supper is a time of worship.**

Whenever a church has the Lord's Supper, it should be a time of worship. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:20-28, had to correct the actions of the Corinthians. They were taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. It was not a time of worship for them. In worship, a Christian is to examine his life and actions. This is to be done in the Lord's Supper because it is a time of worship.

#### **4. Who Controls the Ordinances?**

(1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 28:19-20)

**A. The final authority over the ordinances is Christ.**

The final authority for baptism and the Lord's Supper is Jesus Christ himself. He said all authority was his. He instructed Christians as a body of believers to observe these ordinances. They are to observe them as they make disciples. However, who controls them here on earth—the pastor or the church?

**B. The ordinances should be controlled by the local church.**

Some think that the ordinances should be controlled by the pastor. They think that ordination has given him this control. However, Baptists believe in the priesthood of all believers. A church and its members are under the control of Christ. The Spirit of God leads them with the Scriptures as their final authority. Therefore, Baptists believe that the ordinances are under the control of the local church.

The church as controlled by Christ decides its policies concerning the ordinances. The church, not the pastor, should decide who is admitted into its fellowship. The pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation. The congregation usually accepts his advice concerning who should be baptized. However, he does not have authority to baptize them without church approval.

#### **5. What Policies Should the Church Have For the Ordinances?**

**A. These are suggestions for policies on baptism.**

1) Baptism is important. It is an important practice that the body of Christ is commanded to do. They are commanded to baptize believers. Therefore, all who become Christians should be baptized.

2) The church should baptize only those who publicly confess Christ.

The church is responsible to control baptism. Baptism is not a way of salvation. It is a testimony of one who has been saved. If a person's life does not show that he is a Christian, the church should not baptize him. If a church examines well those who are to be baptized, it will save trouble in the future.

3) The church should baptize all believers who are not scripturally baptized.

All believers who have not been immersed after having become believers should be baptized. Those who come from another Baptist church should be asked about their baptism. One church was going to ordain a man to be a deacon. In the time of questioning they found that he had not been baptized as a believer by immersion. He should not be a deacon or a leader until after baptism.

When Christians from another denomination want to join a Baptist church, they should be questioned about their baptism. If they were not baptized as believers by immersion, the church should ask that they be baptized.

B. These are suggestions for policies on the Lord's Supper.

1) The church should allow only Christians to share in the Lord's Supper.

This is a biblical requirement. The Lord's Supper is a time of remembrance. How can an unsaved person remember his salvation? The Lord's Supper, as baptism, is not magic. It does not give the person the blood and body of Christ. Only those who have been saved should be invited to share.

2) The church should decide whom they will invite to share in the Lord's Supper.

Three different practices are followed by Baptist churches. The local church must decide which one it will follow.

a. "Closed Communion" allows only members of that one congregation to share the Lord's Supper. They believe that they have control over the actions of their members only. Therefore, they can only judge the spiritual condition of those members. Scriptural baptism and the control of the local church are important to this custom.

b. "Close Communion" permits members of another Baptist church to share in the Lord's Supper. They believe that a member of another Baptist church believes as they do. A member in good fellowship with his church would be accepted by their church as a member. Because of this, they believe he should be invited to share the Lord's Supper with them. Scriptural baptism and control by the local church are important to this custom. However, the church trusts the decisions of other Baptist churches.

c. "Open Communion" allows any Christian to share the Lord's Supper with the church. This does not make scriptural baptism an issue. Those who practice this generally believe it is a Christian ordinance. As a Christian ordinance, they believe that the church should not exercise control over who can share in it.

3) The church should have the Lord's Supper regularly.

The church should have the Lord's Supper at regular times. Many have it every three months. The Scriptures do not say how often it is to be observed. Therefore, the church should decide when it will have the Lord's Supper.

## **6. What Have We Studied about the Church Ordinances?**

1. The ordinances are testimonies of blessings already received
2. The ordinances are for believers only.
3. Baptism by immersion shows one's commitment to and unity with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. The Lord's Supper reminds us of the atonement Jesus made for us on the cross.
5. The authority for ordinances is in Christ and under the control of the local church.

**OUTLINE  
CHAPTER SIX**

1. **Who Can Be a Member of a Baptist Church?**
  - A. Being born-again is the first qualification.
  - B. Being a baptized believer is the second qualification.
  - C. These beliefs have a Biblical basis.
  
2. **What Biblical Principles Are Important for Church Members Working Together?**
  - A. Equality in church membership is a New Testament teaching
  - B. Brotherhood in church membership is a biblical teaching.
  
3. **As a Church Member, Do You Have Any Responsibilities?**
  - A. You are responsible for your spiritual gift.
  - B. You are responsible to support your church:
    - 1) Through your prayers
    - 2) Through your tithes and offerings
    - 3) Through your faithful attendance
    - 4) Through your encouragement of others
    - 5) Through your prayerful decisions
  - C. You are responsible to evangelize and edify others.
  
4. **What Are the Results of Mature Church Membership?**
  - A. Fellowship is a result.
  - B. Spiritual growth is a result.
  - C. Spiritual strength is a result.
  
5. **What Have We Studied About Church Membership?**

## **CHAPTER SIX CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Who can be a member of a Baptist church? What biblical principles are important for church membership? What privileges and responsibilities does a Baptist church member have? We want to answer these in this chapter.

A church will only grow to the spiritual level of its leaders. If they are mature in the faith, then the church will be also. The respect that a church has in its community depends upon its members. For example, if the actions of the members show a mature faith, their church will be respected. If they fight among themselves, their church will not be respected.

### **1. Who Can Be a Member of a Baptist Church?**

Church membership is only for those who have been saved and baptized. A baptized believer fulfils two qualifications.

#### **A. Being born-again is the first qualification.**

Church membership is important. However, it is not as important as being a Christian. A person who asks for church membership must be a born-again Christian already. This new birth comes from God. The Holy Spirit comes into a person's life and shows him his sins. This person repents of his sins and by faith commits his life to the Lord Jesus. When he does, he becomes a new person. This change is called the new birth. Anyone who has been born-again may become a church member. No one else meets the first qualification for membership. A church is a fellowship of believers, and only believers can join it. An unsaved person cannot be a citizen of the kingdom of God and should not be a member of his church.

#### **B. Being baptized as a believer by immersion is the second qualification.**

After a person is born-again, he wants to tell others about his new life in Christ. One way to do this is by baptism. Believers are commanded to be baptized. Those who are obedient to Christ's command will be baptized. Baptism means "to immerse." In baptism by immersion, a new believer gives a picture of his salvation experience. It shows his death to sin, his burial and his resurrection to a new life. Only those who have been saved are qualified to be baptized.

Neither baptism nor church membership can save a person. However, to be a church member one needs to be baptized. Why is this true since baptism is not necessary for salvation? Baptism shows a person's commitment to Christ. A church wants members who are willing to give such a witness.

C. There is a biblical basis for these beliefs.

A biblical basis for this belief is in Acts 2:41. "So those who received his word..." means those who repented and believed in Jesus. They did as Peter told them to do. "...Were baptized,..." means those who had been saved were immersed in water. This was their witness that Christ had changed their lives. "...And there were added that day..." shows church membership follows believing and being baptized. "...About three thousand souls" tells us that there were three thousand baptized believers.

In Acts 2:42-47, the nature of church membership can be seen. The church had fellowship and freedom in Christ. They studied together and accepted responsibilities. They were witnesses. In all these, Jesus was Lord.

## 2. What Biblical Principles Are Important for Church Members Working Together?

Church members should think of themselves as brothers and sisters. They should accept others as they want to be accepted. Jesus said, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister..." (Mark 3:35). Paul tells us, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

A. Equality in membership is a New Testament teaching.

Any person who receives the new birth is able to decide God's will for his life. If all believers are able to do this, then all are equal. There is no division in the spiritual body. One person is not more important than another. Christians are all sinners saved by grace. They have been forgiven and have freedom in Christ. This is the basis for Baptist church government. It is government by the members themselves. Each congregation decides what it is to do. They may have a committee to study and make recommendations, but the members will decide what they are to do. This is basic in a Baptist church. Sometimes there are some members who want to control the church. They often speak of equality.

However, they really do not want equality. They want to control the church. They are using equality as a tool to get what they want. The church must protect the equality of all its members. The members should refuse to allow few to run the church.

B. New Testament teaches that church members are brothers in service.

Following the Lord's will together brings brotherhood. Church members have a spirit of brotherhood because they experience many things together. When they work together, fellowship together, pray together and share together, they become close friends. Close friends become like brothers. A church should be like a family. A family in Christ shares together in equality and love. Such a family is not of the flesh but of the Spirit.

### 3. As a Church Member, Do You Have Any Responsibilities?

As a church member, you have privileges and responsibilities. These cannot be separated. Many want the privileges without accepting their responsibilities. Freedom in a country is a privilege. However, freedom brings responsibility upon every citizen. A responsible citizen is ready to protect that freedom, to help his government and to oppose corruption. Responsibility for being a good church member comes with freedom in Jesus Christ. As a church member, you are to use your spiritual gifts and to support your church. You should be active in leading others to Christ and helping them to grow in their faith. As a Christian, your responsibility is to God. He will hold you responsible for your stewardship.

A. You are responsible for your spiritual gift or gifts.

Every Christian has been given at least one spiritual gift. You are responsible to use your spiritual gift to help others.

There are many spiritual gifts. Each is important. Paul discusses the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. There he uses the body as an example of the importance of each gift to the local church. The church is the body of Christ. Each gift is for the good of the church (1 Corinthians 12:7). Paul lists several gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. **"All these (gifts) are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills"** (1 Corinthians 12:11).

The gifts of preaching, teaching or healing are gifts that many believe are important. Being able to interpret and preach God's Word is a gift from God. Being able to teach is a good gift. Being

a doctor and healing people can be used of the Lord. Even though these are important, they are no more important than the other gifts. There are many important gifts that people do not see easily. Being able to listen to a friend is a gift many people do not see. Being able to help another make a good decision is often not seen by others. They are very important in the body of Christ.

Much is heard about the gift of tongues. It is probably the most misused and most misunderstood gift of the Spirit. Many may want this gift only to feel important. Some think that you are not a spiritual Christian unless you have it. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) shows the spiritual maturity of a Christian. The gifts of the Spirit equip the believers for their ministry. The gift of tongues, as many interpret it today, is the least important of all gifts. It is the least helpful in fulfilling the basic purpose of the church. Evangelism and edification of others is the purpose of the church. After Pentecost in Acts 2, the Scriptures speak of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Each time you will find that the one filled gave a bold witness for Christ. Believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. If you read verses 15-21, you will find that Christians are to walk as wise men. They are to encourage one another with music in their hearts. They are to give thanks for everything. This is edification or strengthening others. Boldness in evangelism or steadfastness in edification is the proof of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is not the proof of being saved or filled with the Spirit.

A gift of the Spirit does not make one important to God. One is not important because one can do important things. Believers are important because Christ died for their sin. They are to be faithful in doing what he gives them to do. As a believer, you need to discover your gift if you do not know what it is. These steps can help you find your gift. One, pray asking God to reveal his gift to you. Two, examine your life and abilities. It may be that which you like to do is a gift from God. Three, ask mature Christians whom you know well what they think your gift may be. Four, try using what you think is a gift. If you enjoy it and God blesses it, then you have probably found your gift. You need to develop your gift for greater service. You develop your gift by using it. You should dedicate your gift and its use to God's glory.

B. You are responsible to support your church.

1) Through your prayers (Phillipians 1:19)

God has made you responsible for his church. You are to

support its ministry through prayer. We should pray for the church daily as a whole, each member and the leaders.

2) Through your tithes and offerings (1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 2:45)

God has made you responsible for your tithes and offerings. God's church and its ministry is supported this way. A church depends upon its members for the money needed for its work. Baptists believe biblical stewardship is important. God will bless a church whose members will support it with their tithes and offerings. Biblical stewardship in a church brings a spirit of self-support. It is not biblical to get someone else to pay for something you will not support. Your church needs your support. You must be willing to give more than the least amount you can. Giving the least one can means one wants privileges without responsibilities.

3) Through your faithful attendance (Hebrews 10:25)

God holds you responsible to worship at your church. You should attend every opportunity of worship that you can. If you do not attend worship services, you cannot grow in the faith. Your absence discourages others and weakens your church.

4) Through your encouragement of others (Hebrews 10:24)

God has made you responsible for encouraging one another in the faith. As you encourage one another, you are building up the church. If you speak to others in kindness and love, you help them. If you speak in a bad way to other Christians, you hurt their spiritual development.

5) Through your prayerful decisions (Acts 15:1-29)

God has made you responsible for helping the church determine the will of God. You must help by praying and seeking God's will for your church. You have this freedom given by God. As a Christian you must be a mature church member. A mature church member prays about his decisions.

In Acts 15, the members at Jerusalem were responsible church members. A decision had to be made to determine God's will about the salvation of the Gentiles. A small group of people who knew the most about this met to discuss it. These leaders made a recommendation. In Acts 15:22a we read, "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church..." The whole church had made the decision on what God's will was. These church members were faithful in their responsibility. You have been blessed because of their faithfulness. If you are faithful in

doing God's will, then others will be blessed.

**C. You are responsible for evangelizing and edifying others.**

The purpose of the church is that of evangelism and edification. Evangelism is leading others to receive Jesus as Lord. YOU ARE TO BE AN EVANGELIST. Every member is responsible. The church cannot pay enough people to do its work in evangelism. Evangelism includes praying for the lost and sharing of your testimony. You need to pray and tell others what Christ has done for you. Edification is the building-up of those who have been saved. You are responsible for helping others grow spiritually. You may help others by your faithful attendance. You may help by being an example of the way to give. You may help by witnessing to others. You may help by teaching a Bible study class or by preaching. You may help in all of these. You are responsible unto God to help others to grow spiritually in whatever way you can.

**4. What Are the Results of Mature Church Membership?**

Many do not receive the full blessings of being a church member. Doing those things listed above can bring blessings. Dedicated church membership can bring fellowship, growth and strength.

**A. Fellowship is a result.**

After conversion, the believer desires to fellowship with other believers. This fellowship is important. It is a blessing for dedicated church members. Paul was on his way to Damascus to arrest the Christians. After he met the Lord on the road, Paul sought the fellowship of Christians. John said, "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Christians are to seek Christian fellowship. They should join a church that believes as they do. Baptists respect the right of every believer to interpret the Bible for himself. A good fellowship allows others this freedom. Every Christian has the right to interpret God's will for his life. A member's beliefs should agree with the majority of his fellow church members. If not, then he should seek a church with which he agrees.

**B. Spiritual growth is a result.**

The dedicated church member usually will grow spiritually. Church members grow through praying, studying the Bible and hearing it preached. They grow by sharing their faith and giving their time and money. As they grow in their faith, others in the

church will grow too. When they grow spiritually, they become more mature Christians and better church members. Many enjoy watching children grow and learn. A church enjoys watching a new Christian become more mature. Paul tells us, "...we are to grow up in every way into him who is head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

C. Spiritual strength is a result.

The strength of several people can move a heavy load. The same is true in a church. Several Christians working together can do more than one working by himself. As Christians work together, their ministry is increased. Their witness is given strength.

A Christian's effectiveness for the Lord is increased by others working with him. God gives each Christian at least one gift. A Christian works within the body of Christ, the church. The gifts of other members help his service for Christ.

A Christian's witness is made stronger. Christians as a group can send an evangelist to a new area to preach. A group of Christians in a community working together can do many things. The more members a church has, the more it can do for the Lord.

**5. What Have We Studied About Church Membership?**

1. Being a baptized believer is the basis for church membership.
2. Church membership gives the Christian a way for Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.
3. The fellowship of church members is based upon equality and brotherhood.
4. Each member is responsible for using his gifts for the good of the church.
5. Each member is responsible for supporting his church, leading others to receive Jesus and helping others to grow spiritually.

**OUTLINE**  
**CHAPTER SEVEN**

- 1. What Were Church Leaders Called in the New Testament?**
  - A. Apostles were those who had been with Jesus.
  - B. Prophets spoke the message God gave them.
  - C. Evangelists preached the gospel in new areas.
  - D. The pastor/teacher led and taught a local church.
  - E. Deacons served in a local church.
  
- 2. What Kind of Man Should a Church Choose as Pastor or Deacon?**
  - A. The church leader should be a spiritual person.
  - B. The church leader should be a wise person.
  - C. The church leader should be a respected person.
  
- 3. What Should the Nature of a Church Leader Be According to the New Testament?**
  - A. The church leader is a servant.
  - B. The church leader is a "priest among priests."
  - C. The church leader is called by Christ.
  
- 4. How Should a Church Select Its Leaders?**
  - A. Selection is described by three New Testament words:
    - 1) "Called" (Acts 13:2)
    - 2) "Selected" (Acts 6:1-7)
    - 3) "Appointed" (Acts 14:23)
  - B. Selection is by the church as led by the Holy Spirit.
  - C. Selection should be according to need.
  - D. Selection should be according to biblical qualifications.
  
- 5. Should a Pastor Be Paid?**
  - A. The pastor should be paid for these reasons:
    - 1) It is scriptural.
    - 2) It is just.
  - B. The pastor should be paid by the church he serves.
  - C. The pastor should be paid regularly and adequately.
  
- 6. What Do Baptists Believe About Ordination of Leaders?**
  - A. What is the meaning of ordination?
  - B. What are some biblical examples?
  - C. What does ordination mean in a Baptist church?
  
- 7. What Have We Studied About Church Leadership?**

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CHURCH LEADERSHIP

What were church leaders called in the New Testament? What did they do? What qualifications should a church leader have? What kind of person should a church leader be? What do Baptists believe about ordination? Let us seek to answer these questions.

Church leadership is important. With good church leaders the church can be strong. The spiritually qualified pastor is one who is growing in the faith. He seeks to know God's will. The church leader is a servant under Christ. The leader is responsible for the spiritual condition of the church. The church needs leaders who are called, gifted and spiritually mature.

#### 1. What Were Church Leaders Called in the New Testament?

There were four leaders listed in Ephesians 4:11. **"And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."** Also in Acts 6, there is the selection of deacons.

##### A. Apostles were those who had been with Jesus.

Apostle means "one who is sent as an agent of another." In Acts 1:20-26, they selected a replacement for Judas. To qualify, the man had to have been with them **"beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he (Jesus) was taken up from us..."** (Acts 1:22a). Also he should be **"...a witness to his resurrection"** (Acts 1:22b). This prevents one today from being called an apostle. There are people who are witnesses. There are people who are sent. However, there is no one who is qualified according to Acts 1:22. The teaching of the apostles was about the life, work and teachings of Jesus. This teaching is found in the New Testament.

##### B. Prophets spoke the message God gave them.

The prophet means "one who speaks for another." A prophet of God spoke the message that God gave him. The prophet was to speak without fear. There is a difference in the importance of the prophet in the Old and New Testaments. This is true for two reasons. One was the coming of Jesus Christ. The other was the coming of the Holy Spirit upon ALL believers. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came to a few people for a specific work. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit has come to give power to every believer. He will do this for those who will allow him to control their lives.

### C. Evangelists preached the gospel in new areas.

An evangelist is "one who brings or announces good news." The word, evangelist, is used three times in the New Testament. Philip is called "an evangelist. **"...We entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven (deacons)..."** (Acts 21:8). In Ephesians 4:11, the evangelist is one who has been gifted for his work. Paul tells Timothy to **"...do the work of an evangelist..."** (2 Timothy 4:5). Timothy helped Paul in his mission work. Paul also told Timothy to preach and to teach. An evangelist is one who preaches and teaches the gospel to those who have not heard.

Today this word is used wrongly. An evangelist is more than a pastor's assistant. He is more than an untrained preacher. He is more than a crusade preacher. An evangelist brings the good news.

### D. The pastor/teacher led and taught a local church.

Bible teachers say that "pastors and teachers" in Ephesians 4:11 is one ministry. This ministry is being a shepherd and teacher of a church. The New Testament uses three words to describe a church leader. Pastor means "shepherd." Bishop means "overseer." Elder means "respected leader." Luke uses these three terms for the same leaders. **"...He (Paul) sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17). "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (bishops). Be shepherds of the church of God..." (Acts 20:28 NIV).** Baptists use the word, pastor. Pastor, they believe, describes best the work of a spiritual church leader.

The words--pastor and bishop--are used wrongly by many people. In some denominations, there are bishops who oversee several pastors and churches. For some people, pastor means the trained, ordained leader of several churches and evangelists. In the New Testament, the leader of a church was called pastor, bishop and elder. This person was the leader and teacher of a local church. Therefore, Baptists do not believe in a house of bishops. Neither do they limit the use of the word pastor only to those who have received theological training.

### E. Deacons served in a local church.

Deacon means "servant." In Jerusalem, the church grew rapidly. The ministry of helping the widows and poor became a burden for the apostles. It was taking all their time. They had no

time for studying, praying and preaching. A division was beginning in the church. The apostles asked the church to "...pick out from among you seven...whom we may appoint to this duty" (Acts 6:3). The church did this. Those chosen apparently did well, and the problem is not heard of again. Stephen and Philip were also good preachers. Their work is written about in the book of Acts, chapters 6, 7 and 8. The church chose mature men to serve as deacons.

A church depends upon its deacons. They help the church do its work. They help the pastor. They help in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Deacons help in visiting the sick in and in caring for those in need. Good deacons are a blessing to the church and pastor.

## **2. What Kind of Man Should a Church Choose as Pastor or Deacon?**

A church should choose a similar type of person as pastor or deacon. Paul gives the qualifications for a pastor, bishop or elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and for a deacon in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The apostles gave a good summary of the type of person a Church leader should be "...Brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom..." (Acts 6:3).

A. The church leader should be a spiritual person.

"...Full of the Spirit..." means a person that the Holy Spirit controls. Full when referring to people means "the quality or kind of life a person lives." The spiritual leader of a Church must be one who is led by the Spirit of God. This is the first qualification that a church should consider. If a person is not spiritual, then he is not the kind of leader the church needs.

B. The church leader should be a wise person.

"...Full...of wisdom..." means "a wise person." In Africa, the wise, mature leader is respected. A church wants a man who is wise enough to give good advice. He must know about life, the world, people and the ways of God. Wisdom is not education from schools. The wise man has more than knowledge; he has wisdom.

C. The church leader should be a respected person.

"...Men of good repute..." are "men with good reputations." A man with a good reputation is respected. A church should choose a leader who is respected. He should be respected both in the church and in the community. He should be an example of a believer. Many non-believers are watching his life and actions. They will respect the church if their leader is respected.

### **3. What Should the Nature of a Church Leader Be According to the New Testament?**

**A. The church leader is a servant.**

The disciples had problems with being servants. Many today also have such a problem. The disciples wanted to tell others what to do. Jesus had to correct their thinking. He said,

**You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42-45).**

The world does not think a leader should be like this. The pastor seeks to help people and does not use them for his benefit.

**B. The church leader is a "priest among priests."**

A priest is a minister. A pastor is a minister. Both are God's ministers. Baptists call their leader, pastor, instead of priest. The doctrine of the priesthood of the believer teaches that every believer is a priest and minister. Because of this major doctrine, Baptists teach that all ministers are the same before God. The pastor is the church leader, but he is not the only minister.

Some denominations divide the church members from the leaders. Baptists refuse to do this. Generally, Baptists will not allow their leaders to wear clerical collars or robes. This type of clothing shows a non-biblical separation. Baptist church members do not wear clothing that divides them from others in their community. Jesus' clothing was like that worn by those to whom he ministered. His example should be followed.

**C. The church leader is called by Christ.**

God calls every one to receive new life through Jesus. Those who receive Christ become his ministers.

The church was begun by Christ. God uses local churches in evangelism and edification. The church is made up of members who are God's ministers. As evangelists, they lead others to accept Jesus as Lord. As teachers, they teach the new believers in the

faith. From these ministers, God calls church leaders. Church leaders equip the ministers, that is the church members. These ministers do the work of evangelism and edification. This is the work of winning and teaching those without Christ.

A church should examine every person who says that he is called of God to be a leader. Some men today desire to be a pastor for wrong reasons. Some want personal gain, a job, power and prestige. A church leader should serve because of his commitment to Jesus. Just as Jesus gave himself for sinners, Christians should give themselves for his work. Being committed to Christ means that one is willing to do the Lord's will. Service out of a commitment to Christ brings honour and glory to him. Church leadership may be difficult, unappreciated, unrecognized or even unpaid. However, the leader who serves Christ will remain faithful.

#### 4. How Should a Church Select Its Leaders?

A. Selection is described by three New Testament Words:

1) "Called" (Acts 13:2)

This is the selection by the Holy Spirit. This is first. All are called by the Spirit unto salvation. All are called to be mature in the faith. Some are called to special service. This call must be confirmed by the church. They did this with Paul and Barnabas.

2) "Selected" (Acts 6:1-7)

This selection is by a church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This matches the abilities shown in one's life with the needs of a church. Choosing a church leader should never be like an election within the government where campaigning is done.

3) "Appointed" (Acts 14:23)

Some think that Paul and Barnabas chose and established leaders in churches. Without a doubt, they did help the young churches to identify good men. However, the word, appointed, was first used to mean "election by the show of hands." The idea of an election is not denied in this meaning. Paul and Barnabas were wise. They knew that a church would follow a leader it chose.

B. Selection is by the church as led by the Holy Spirit.

Baptists believe strongly that a church is able to decide God's will in choosing its pastor. A church should do these things

when it needs a pastor. The church should choose a committee. The committee should be told by the church what type of leader they want. The committee should seek a leader to recommend to the church. They should recommend only the one whom they believe is God's man for the church. When they find such a person, they should present him to the church. The church should talk with him about his salvation, his call and his vision for the church. The members should pray to decide what God's will is. After all this, the members should vote as they believe God wants them to vote.

C. Selection should be according to need.

A church should choose a leader according to their need. The need may be for a pastor who is a good teacher. At another time, the need may be for a leader who is a good evangelist. The church should discuss its needs. After the needs are decided, then a committee should be chosen. They should look for that type of leader.

D. Selection should be according to biblical qualifications.

A church should always choose a leader who has the biblical qualifications. These are for the benefit of the church. A church will have problems if they only look at one area of qualifications when selecting a leader. It is possible to choose someone who is loved by everyone. However, because he is not a spiritual person, he could make a poor leader. If a church chooses a man with many wives, it should not be surprised if God does not bless them. A pastor who is not biblically qualified will bring problems to the church. To refuse to accept such a leader is easier than to correct the problems he brings. Choosing education instead of gifts, popularity instead of spirituality or outward appearance instead of inward quality brings problems.

## 5. Should the Pastor Be Paid?

The pastor should be paid. Many pastors in Africa are farmers. Others have work which helps them make money on which to live. Because of this, many members think that the pastor should not be paid. Some even believe that since the pastor is "working for God," he should get his support directly from God. A pastor does get blessings from God as all other Christians.

A. A pastor should be paid for these reasons:

1) It is scriptural.

Jesus said, **"...the labourer deserves his food"** (Matthew

10:10). Paul wrote, "...The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). He also wrote, "Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6).

2) It is just.

Any person who has been hired by another should be paid for his work. It is agreed that a company must pay its workers. The church receives the benefits of the pastor's labour. They have asked him to work for them. They should pay the pastor.

B. The pastor should be paid by the church he serves.

The church wants its pastor to visit the sick, the lost and the members. They want him to preach and to plan the church programs. He is to conduct weddings, funerals and special services. He is to give up his time for the church. Since the church expects these things, it is necessary that the church support him. Paul taught that those who receive the benefits of the pastor's work should pay him. There are at least two problems if someone else pays the pastor. First, a worker wants to please the one who pays him. If the missionary, association, convention or union pays the pastor, he may not feel responsible to the church. Second, if another group pays the pastor, the church feels that it is not responsible to pay him. Some Baptist work has followed examples of other denominations in paying the pastor. Some Baptist churches give money to the association or union which is to pay the pastor. This has put the pastor in a difficult place. Since the church members think the association or union is paying the salary, they do not give. Since the church does not give, the association or union has no money to pay the pastor. Having someone else pay the pastor is not a biblical teaching. This is a real problem.

C. A pastor should be paid regularly and adequately.

Each church should decide the salary of its pastor. Some churches pay their pastor a percentage of the offerings. Other churches pay a specific amount either weekly or monthly. Most Baptist pastors in Africa are bi-vocational. This means they have two jobs. The pastor may also be a farmer, teacher or government worker. He receives most of his living expenses from that job. As a principle, the pastor's salary should be about the same amount of money that the majority of the members receive.

A church should begin paying their pastor as soon as he begins work. The church should pay him every week or every month. They should pay according to the amount of time they expect him to give, their ability to give, and his needs. Years ago, some rural churches paid their pastor with food because money was difficult to get. The pastor has expenses, such as travel, in serving the church. The church should pay these. The church should not believe that these are part of his salary. The pastor should give a tithe of his money back to the church.

## **6. What Do Baptists Believe About Ordination of Leaders?**

Ordination is a tradition in the churches which can bring some problems. Some traditions are different than the biblical teachings.

### **A. What is the meaning of ordination?**

The word, ordination, does not occur in the New Testament. The word translated as ordain is also translated as appoint, choose or set apart. Today, ordination means "to set apart a person for the ministry to which God has called him." Baptists believe that ordination does not set the pastor apart from his members. It is the recognition of a person's divine call. It recognizes the gifts of the Spirit which have been seen in him. It recognizes his understanding of spiritual and biblical matters. Ordination IS NOT an act of giving power or special grace. It IS the recognition of power given by God. Ordination IS NOT an act of ordained leaders. It IS an act of the local church. Ordination IS NOT an act of setting the pastor apart from the members. IT IS an act of setting the pastor apart for his God called ministry.

### **B. What are some biblical examples?**

Matthias (Acts 1:26) was set apart for the ministry of an apostle. Seven men were set apart for the ministry of a deacon (Acts 6:1-7). In Acts 13:3, Paul and Barnabas were set apart for a missionary ministry. Paul reminded Timothy of his "ordination" service (1 Timothy 4:14). Elders in the churches of Galatia (Acts 14:23) were set apart by Paul, Barnabas and the churches.

### **C. What does ordination mean in a Baptist church?**

Baptists recognize the need for some people who are set aside for special ministry. Only those who have shown that they have been called of God should be ordained. Those called will be gifted by the Holy Spirit and will understand spiritual matters. Ordination is under the control of the local church.

In the ordination of a pastor, other pastors should be invited to meet as a committee to examine this person. Baptists do not believe ordination is by or for pastors only. Church members

should be included on this committee. The committee should be wise enough to examine the one to be ordained. After the examination, the committee makes its recommendation to the church. The church makes the final decision. If the church desires to ordain the man, the committee may help in the ordination service.

An ordination service includes prayer for God's leadership and blessing on the pastor and his work. A biblical challenge is given to the person and to the church. The person should tell of his conversion and call. He should be asked questions to show his spiritual maturity, call, gifts and biblical knowledge. The laying on of hands is a symbol of recognition of a God called ministry.

Other churches and leaders of the convention or union should be told what the church has done. He may also need to be registered with the government. This may require the approval of the convention or union.

#### **7. What Have We Studied About Church Leadership?**

1. Biblical leaders in the local church are pastors and deacons.
2. Church leaders should be spiritual, wise and respected.
3. Church leaders should be servants committed to Christ. They should be set apart for ministry, not apart from the members.
4. Leaders should be chosen by the local church under the leadership of the Spirit, according to the church's needs and their biblical qualifications.

## OUTLINE CHAPTER EIGHT

1. **Should Church Government Be Local Or Centralized?**
  - A. There has been a question of church government in history.
  - B. Local church government is government by all the members.
  - C. Centralized control is government by a few people either in or outside of the local church.
  - D. Baptists believe in local church government by the members.
  
2. **What Biblical Principles Should Be Followed in Choosing a Type of Church Government?**
  - A. The brotherhood of believers is a New Testament teaching.
  - B. The spiritual freedom of the believers is God's plan.
  
3. **Is There Biblical And Other Support for a Church Governing Itself?**
  - A. There are biblical examples of members making decisions.
  - B. The way the word, church, was first used supports church government by the members.
  
4. **What Are Some Important Principles of Baptist Church Government?**
  - A. Membership is freely chosen.
  - B. Members are equal before God.
  - C. A church must be free from outside control or coercion.
  
5. **What Are Some Problems That Happen in the Government of a Baptist Church?**
  - A. A member may want to control the church.
  - B. Members may want to do whatever they choose.
  - C. Members may want others to govern the church for them.
  
6. **What Are Some Important Principles for Good Church Government in a Baptist Church?**
  - A. The use of committees is wise.
  - B. Each member should share in the discussion before a decision is made.
  - C. Each member should help the church.
  
7. **What Have We Studied About Church Government?**

## **CHAPTER EIGHT CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

What types of church governments are found today? Why do Baptists choose to follow a church government by the members themselves? What biblical principles are included in church government? Is there biblical and other support for church government by the members themselves? Let us look at these questions.

All groups-----family, school, business, church--must have some type of government. A group decides their type of government on the basis of their beliefs and purposes. Baptists believe that church government should follow New Testament teachings. Some members of a Baptist church would change their type of church government. Such members have not made a good study of biblical principles or Baptist history. They may be wanting to follow the example of another denomination. Since Baptist beliefs are important, their church government should be consistent with them.

### **1. Should Church Government Be Local Or Centralized?**

There are two basic types of church government--local or centralized. Church government by all the members themselves is local church government. Church government by a few people either in or outside of a local church is centralized control.

#### **A. There has been a question of church government in history.**

In the New Testament, each church was governed by the members of that church. There was no centralized control over the churches. The Roman government was very centralized. As a result in the second century, government of the churches became centralized. This control became stronger over the years. One time in history, there was only one church (denomination). It divided in the year 1054 between the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. One reason for the division was the control of the church. At the time of the Reformation, no local church governed itself. New Testament teachings had been forgotten.

#### **B. Local church government is government by all the members.**

##### **1) Biblical teachings support local church government.**

The New Testament churches were independent, self-governing fellowships of baptized believers. Each church was free

to determine God's will for that church. The leaders were not separated from the members. The leader was an example of those who believed. The believers were equal before God. The churches followed the apostles' teachings, which are now in the New Testament. They depended upon the Holy Spirit for guidance. Churches helped each other and worked together. They had spiritual unity in Christ. Therefore, local church government was all they needed.

## 2) Strengths of local church government are:

a. It is biblical. The New Testament churches governed themselves this way.

b. The church is more under the direct control of Christ. This is a theocracy. Theocracy means "government by God." The Holy Spirit leads the church into the truth found in the Scriptures.

c. It follows some important New Testament teachings. The believers' unity, equality before God and spiritual freedom in Christ are respected in local church government.

d. It respects the believer. Local church government means that every Christian is able to determine God's will. This respect of the believer follows the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

e. It gives the church freedom to follow God's will. This means that the church is free to decide what God's will is. The church is responsible for following his leadership alone.

## 4) Weaknesses of local church government are:

a. There can be a lack of fellowship with other churches. Believers need Christian fellowship and so do churches.

b. There can be a lack of unity with other churches. There is strength in unity. Churches have unity in Christ. There is also a strong desire for unity with other believers and churches.

C. Centralized control is government by a few people either in or outside the local church.

1) Centralized control developed after the writing of the New Testament.

Centralized control following the pattern of the Roman government developed in the second century. As we have seen, centralized control became very strong. The leaders were separa-

ted from the members. The leaders controlled the church government. The church members were not allowed to involve themselves in the church government. It was the responsibility of those who had been trained.

2) Strengths of a centralized control of churches are:

a. There is a sense of unity and fellowship. Belonging to a national group can give a sense of unity and fellowship.

b. Centralized church government allows trained leaders to give all their time to that work.

3) Weaknesses of centralized control of churches are:

a. It does not have a strong foundation in biblical teachings.

b. Centralized control can miss the needs and desires of a local church.

c. Those in control can use their power to keep others from gaining control.

d. It can prevent rapid church development.

e. It can be an organization more than a spiritual body.

4) The following are three examples of centralized control.

The following three denominations are examples of centralized control. Some other denominations have a form of government similar to these. Some, even of these examples, are beginning to give more local freedom.

a. The Roman Catholic Church has the most centralized church government. The pope is considered the representative of Christ on earth. He shares his control with the bishops. However, according to their doctrine, the pope can speak for Christ. The congregations of the "church" (or denomination) are controlled or influenced by its bishops. The local congregation has some freedom. However, it will not often oppose the wishes of its bishop. Generally, there are only a few bishops for the many congregations of a country. Once a bishop is chosen, he will continue until retirement, death or removal from office.

b. The Church of England also has a system of bishops like that of the Roman Catholic Church. However, their head is the monarch of England. This person has given the authority for the church to the bishops. Their authority, however, is not the same as that of the Catholic bishops. Their congregations have more freedom than the Catholic congregations.

c. The Church of Scotland or Presbyterian Church has a centralized government. They have a group of elders in the local congregations that control many local matters. There is a General

Assembly in which the representatives from these local elders make decisions for the denomination. Their government is by representatives of the local congregations. The churches are governed by the representatives that they have elected. The members have given their responsibilities for church government to their representatives.

D. Baptists believe in local church government by the members.

Baptists teach the need to follow New Testament teachings. These teachings support government of a local church by the members themselves. Baptists oppose any attempt to centralize power and control over the churches. There are weaknesses. However, Baptists work to remove these by working together in associations and conventions. These Baptist groups provide fellowship, unity and strength in evangelism. These groups do not have control over a local church. They have influence but not power. They can ask, but they cannot tell a church what to do. A local church governs itself. This is sometimes called "democracy."

Democracy means "government by the people." In this type of church government, the congregation governs itself. This means all members share in its decisions. As much as possible, each member can be a part of the church government. The church is controlled by the members under the leadership of the Spirit of Christ.

A Baptist church will receive suggestions from the association or convention/union. However, the church refuses to give up its freedom and responsibility to govern itself. In this type of church government, the local churches make up the denomination. Therefore, the churches have more freedom from denominational control than those in other forms of church government.

There are many Baptist churches. There is not one Baptist Church for a country. A country has a Baptist convention/union. The Baptist church is a local church.

In countries where the work is new, some Baptists desire a more centralized church government. This is because most have not seen local church government. They live in a country that has a strong centralized government. They know other denominations which have strong centralized governments. Some have the association, convention or union pay their pastor. Some think the executive committee of an association or convention/union has control over the churches. Some churches allow the church committee to make all their decisions. These examples forget some

important biblical doctrines. A New Testament church is one that follows the New Testament teachings. Baptist church government should be consistent with Baptist beliefs.

## **2. What Biblical Principles Should Be Followed in Choosing a Type of Church Government?**

The New Testament does not give a specific example for church government. This may be why there are so many types of church government today. Baptists believe government of a local church by the members themselves is supported by New Testament teachings.

### **A. The brotherhood of believers is a New Testament teaching.**

A church is a fellowship of born-again members. They are members of a spiritual family. As family members, they are the same before God the Father in their privileges and responsibilities. **"For God shows no partiality"** (Romans 2:11). The New Testament teaches that the family members have different spiritual gifts. These gifts are for serving God. Gifts do not show one's place in a church. Christians depend upon each other. Jesus taught that believers are to be servants, not lords.

### **B. The spiritual freedom of the believer is God's plan.**

God in his plan gave freedom in spiritual matters to every person. He gave respect to people by allowing them this choice. A church should not use a church government that is different from God's plan. This does not mean a Christian can do as he pleases. Every person is responsible to God for that freedom. The church may choose a trained leader. However, the training does not give one the right to control others. Each member is free and able to decide God's will for himself. Equality and freedom are the basis of democracy.

## **3. Is There Biblical and Other Support for a Church Governing Itself?**

### **A. There are biblical examples of members making decisions.**

In Acts 6, the church in Jerusalem selected seven men to serve as deacons. The apostles asked the church for help. They asked the church to choose qualified men to help them in the church's ministry. The church in Antioch (Acts 13) sent out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries. The church confirmed their call through prayer. Paul and Barnabas returned to this church to re-

port on their work. The church in Jerusalem met to discuss the salvation of the Gentiles. In Acts 15:22a, we read "...it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, WITH THE WHOLE CHURCH.."

B. The way the word, church, was first used supports church government by the members.

The word, church, was first used to mean the governing assembly of Athens. The members of this assembly were all the free citizens of the city. These free citizens made the decisions for the city. Equality and freedom with responsibility were the basis for their democracy. The Greeks began government by the people many years before Christ. The Romans had a centralized government in which the emperor had much power. This government began to influence church government about one hundred years after Christ. Since the Reformation, churches have developed different types of church government. Baptists believe that church government should follow New Testament teachings. Equality and freedom with responsibility are important teachings.

#### **4. What Are Some Important Principles of Baptist Church Government?**

A. Membership is by free choice

Membership is always a matter of free choice. A person becomes a member only after asking to do so. If he has been saved and scripturally baptized, then he can be a member when he asks. A person must be able to repent of his sins, believe in Christ Jesus and choose to ask for baptism and membership. Baptists are opposed to baptism of babies. They are opposed to any form of coercion. Coercion means "to force someone to do something that he did not choose freely to do." A member is not forced to join a Baptist church. He is a member by his free choice.

B. Members are equal before God.

There are no rules in a democratic church. All members are the same before God. They have privileges and responsibilities. They are responsible to God to use their spiritual gifts to help the church. They are to be faithful in what God has called them to do. The leaders are given their authority by the members themselves. The leader who is faithful to God will be trusted by the members. An unfaithful leader will not be trusted. All members are ministers who must be faithful to God. Each member who uses mature words and actions gains the respect of others. Biblically, according to James 2:1-13, it is wrong for members to show partiality.

**C. A church must be free from outside control or coercion.**

A Baptist church is an independent fellowship. A Baptist church governs itself. Baptists oppose centralized control in church government. A church will work together with others. However, it will not be coerced. It will not be forced to do something it did not freely choose to do. Baptists have been jailed because they would not be coerced by others. They refused to do what they did not believe was the will of God. Christ is the only authority over the church. A committee, association convention/union has no authority over a church. The Bible is the guide for faith and actions of Christians and churches. A church works together with other Baptist churches of the country in a convention or union. These have no control over a local church. They suggest plans, programmes and actions. It is the local church's responsibility to decide if it is God's will for them. In the spirit of freedom, Christian brotherhood and spiritual unity, Baptists are known for their working together. Using our independence to work together is more Christian than fighting one another.

**5. What Are Some Problems That Happen in the Government of a Baptist Church?**

**A. A member may want to control the church.**

Baptist church government is by all the members. In freedom such as this, there is at times a person who wants to control the church. This happens when there is a powerful person and members who are afraid to speak against him. To prevent this from happening, the whole church must accept the responsibility for its freedom. Telling such a person that he cannot control the church is not easy. Christ did not say everything important would be easy.

**B. Members may want to do whatever they choose.**

When everyone does as he pleases, there is no government. However, some believe that democracy is like Judges 21:25. **"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes."** The democracy of a Baptist Church does not mean that every member can do as he pleases. Does a slave do what he pleases? No! Paul called himself the slave of Christ. Does this mean Paul did what he pleased or what Christ wanted him to do? Of course, Paul did what Christ wanted him to do. Believers today must do the will of the one who saved them. If Christ is controlling the membership of a church, will there be many conflicts? There will not if Christ is actually in charge.

**C. Members may want others to govern the church for them.**

There are members who are happy to let others make their decisions. Freedom means work. Many refuse to accept responsibility. This happens in some Baptist churches. Church members may allow the church committee to make their decisions. They may allow the executive committee of the association or convention/union to make the decisions. When the church does not accept the responsibility for church government, it also loses its freedom.

**6. What Are Some Important Principles for Good Church Government in a Baptist Church?**

**A. The use of committee is wise.**

A Baptist church should use committees in its work. The church is still in control whenever they appoint a committee. The church gives the committee the authority that is needed to do its work. A committee can help a church by being responsible for a certain need. For example, a church could need a building committee or a finance committee. The committee brings its recommendations to the whole church for its decisions. A committee should not abuse the authority it has been given. If it does the church should stop the action or replace the committee.

**B. Each member should share in the discussion before a decision is made.**

In Africa, most decisions are reached by general agreement. Whenever a church is making a decision, all members should be asked to share in the discussion. As each member has opportunity to share what he thinks the Lord's will is, the group decides what it should do. Each member should attend such a meeting. The leader needs to give every member regardless of age or position an opportunity to speak. The group needs to prevent a few people from speaking all the time. Such a meeting often takes a long time, but it is a good way of making a decision.

**C. Each member should help the church.**

God intends for a member to come and work. His Spirit gives each believer a spiritual gift for the good of a church (1 Peter 4:10). Each member should share in the progress of the Lord's work. Each member should be seeking the Lord's will. The church should expect its members to be spiritually mature disciples. The church should expect from its members what God expects from them.

## **7. What Have We Studied About Church Government?**

1. Local church government by the members themselves follows biblical principles.

2. Baptists believe in equality and freedom with responsibility in church government.

3. There are three important principles that Baptists follow in their church government. These are membership by free choice, members who are the same in privilege and responsibility before God and independence from coercion.

4. Some people cause problems for Baptist church government. Some people want to control the church themselves. Some people want to do whatever they please. Some people want others to govern the church for them.

5. Church government by the members should use committees, allow each member to share in the discussion before a decision and expect each member to help the church.

**OUTLINE**  
**CHAPTER NINE**

1. **Does a Baptist Church Work With Other Baptist Churches?**
  - A. Are there any biblical examples to follow?
  - B. What is an association or convention/union?
    - 1) "...A group of churches...?"
    - 2) "...Of similar beliefs and practices...?"
    - 3) "...Joined together...?"
    - 4) "...For fellowship and service...?"
    - 5) "...To the glory of God...?"
  - C. What are some principles for churches working together?
    - 1) Interdependence with independence is important.
    - 2) Working together gives the denomination life.
    - 3) Free choice of working together is necessary.
    - 4) The rights of others must be respected.
  - D. What is the purpose of an association or convention/union?
  - E. Who can be a member of an association or convention/union?
  - F. How would you draw a picture of an association?
  - G. How does an association or convention/union work?
    - 1) What is the work of the leaders?
    - 2) What is the work of the executive committee?
  - H. Are the association and convention/union independent groups?
2. **Should Baptists Work With Other Denominations?**
  - A. Cooperation which helps the church's purpose can be good.
  - B. Cooperation can have a corrective effect.
  - C. Cooperation can be a good witness to the non-Christians in the community.
3. **What Should Be the Church's Relationship to the National Government?**
  - A. The ideal principle is:
    - 1) A free church
    - 2) A free nation
    - 3) Separation of church and national government
  - B. Areas of mutual concern of churches and government are:
    - 1) Stability in the country
    - 2) Welfare of the people
    - 3) Honesty and integrity of those in public service
  - C. Christians have responsibility to their government.
4. **What Have We Studied About Church Relationships?**

## CHAPTER NINE

### CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS

If a church is independent, why should it relate to others? What is an association or convention/union? What are some principles for churches working together? Should Baptists work with other denominations? What should be the church's relationship with the national government? Let us look at these questions.

A Baptist church is independent yet interdependent. Independent means that Baptists are free and responsible under Christ. Interdependent means they depend upon each other. Christians and churches are interdependent because they are not complete unto themselves. Paul uses the example of a body to teach interdependence (Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:14-26). A Christian or a church is biblically correct to join others to serve God. The church is to lead others to Jesus and to build up the believer in his faith.

#### 1. Does a Baptist Church Work With Other Baptist Churches?

Generally, Baptist churches work with one another in associations and conventions/unions. Let us examine these carefully.

##### A. Are there any biblical examples to follow?

The words---"association," "convention" or "union"---are not found in the Bible. In the New Testament, the churches had not begun either of these. There is not a specific example of church government in the New Testament. We also cannot find a specific way we are to work together with other churches. There are some passages in which churches helped one another. In Acts 15, the Antioch church sought the advice of the church in Jerusalem. Paul, in Galatians 2:1-10, was willing to check his message with the message of others. Antioch helped with famine relief in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). This was a response of one church to another. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 9:1-5, the Gentile churches gave an offering to help the Christians in Jerusalem.

##### B. What is an association or convention/union?

One definition can be used to explain both of these. The difference between an association and a convention/union is the area they include. An association is generally limited to a certain

local area, such as a district. The convention/union is one that includes all the cooperating Baptist churches in a country. Therefore, this definition will include both. "An association (or convention/union) is a group of churches of similar beliefs and practices that have joined together for fellowship and service to the glory of God." Let us examine this definition to understand it better.

1) "...A group of churches..."

An association is different from a society or a labour union that is composed of individuals. Such groups exist to bring profit to the individual members. However, a Baptist association has only churches as members. An association exists to help others, not to make money or give jobs. The Baptist association has a spiritual purpose.

2) "...Of similar beliefs and practices..."

The association is an association of Baptist churches. It is not an association for all denominations. It is only for those whose beliefs and customs are similar. An association, generally, accepts any church that has similar beliefs and customs. Baptist churches trust the Bible as their final authority. They believe in the lordship of Christ, salvation by grace through faith and the priesthood of the believer. They practice baptism of believers by immersion, fellowship with equality and freedom, freedom with responsibility and evangelism.

3) "...Joined together..."

An association begins when a group of churches join themselves together by free choice. Each church decides to join with other churches. Christians and churches should not be forced to join together. Joining must be a free act. The church cannot be forced into an association, convention or union.

4) "...For fellowship and service..."

An association promotes fellowship among churches. This fellowship gives strength to God's work. The association helps churches to grow. In fellowship with other churches, there can be growth. Through evangelism and missions, there can be growth in numbers. A joint Bible School helps churches to grow in God's Word. Through fellowship, the association enables churches to increase their service to others.

5) "...To the glory of God..."

All Christians should desire to bring glory to God. The churches, associations and conventions/unions are to glorify God.

All of these exist for God's gain not theirs. This is the reason that Baptist associations are different from those of the world. Associations of the world often begin with selfish reasons. An association or convention/union must show the love of God.

C. What are some principles for churches' working together?

1) Interdependence with independence is important.

Interdependence is depending upon one another. Independence is the freedom to do God's will as you are led to do so. Interdependence and independence are biblical. Independence which brings strife is not biblical. Christians are free but are told to submit themselves one to another. This is true for churches as well as Christians. Each Christian's gifts or abilities help others. Each church helps other churches.

2) Working together gives the denomination life.

Churches working together to spread the gospel is in keeping with the Spirit of Christ. When churches work together for such a purpose, they help each other advance the kingdom of God. Working together is based upon independent fellowships.

3) Free choice of working together is necessary.

The Christian faith should be free from coercion. Coercion means "to force someone to do something that he did not choose freely to do." Coercion abuses the freedom God gave to man. Jesus refused to allow his disciples to coerce the man who was not following them (Luke 9:49-50). In Christian history, some men coerced others to believe as they did. Baptists believe that church membership is by free choice. The membership of a church in an association or convention/union must also be by free choice.

4) The rights of others must be respected.

Those more powerful will often force their wills upon those whose rights are not respected. It is easy to think the minority is wrong. Baptists respect the rights of others. Any church, association or convention/union may choose to withdraw fellowship from a member. This should be done if one group has abused biblical teachings and Baptist customs. However, on any issue, the minority must not be coerced.

D. What is the purpose of associations and convention/union?

Baptists believe that the churches of the convention/union and local associations are the denomination. The denomination exists to help the churches fulfil their purpose. The churches help

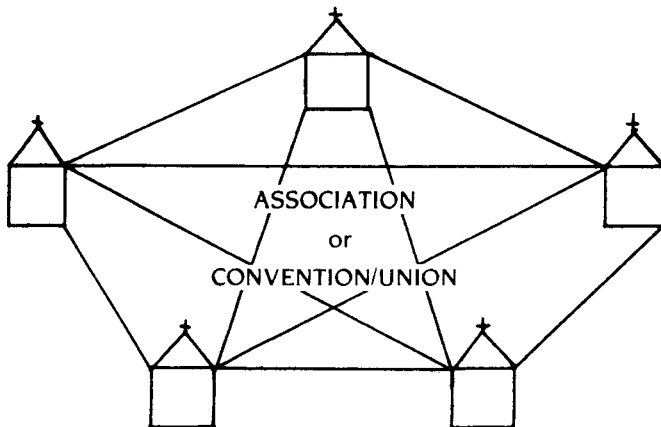
the work of the convention/union and associations to spread the gospel. The association and the convention/union seek to meet these needs of the churches. Churches need fellowship, doctrinal identity, mission outreach, education and church development.

**E. Who can be members of an association or convention/union?**

The members of the association or convention/union are churches. These churches, by free choice, work together with other Baptist churches. A church can be a member of both an association and the convention/union. The convention/union and association are separate groups. They are concerned about each other because the same churches are their members. The association serves and unites Baptist churches of a small area. The convention/union serves and unites Baptist churches of a country or large area. A church may be a member of either the association or convention/union. It may be a member of both.

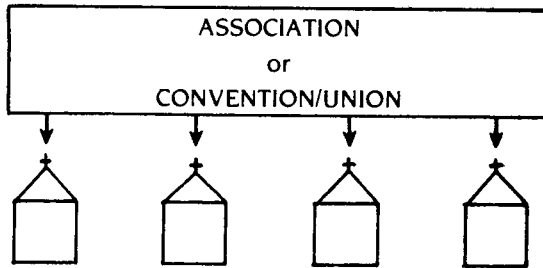
**F. How would you draw a picture of an association?**

- 1) A picture of independent yet interdependent churches



This picture shows that each church is independent. They are free to do what they believe God's will is for them. They are also interdependent because they depend upon each other. The association (or convention/union) is churches working together, helping each other and reaching the lost for Christ.

## 2) A picture of a mistaken idea of an association



This picture shows the mistaken idea that an association or convention/union is above the churches. This gives the idea that decisions are made there and passed down to the churches. In an organization like this, the churches would not be independent. They would not have the right to make decisions themselves. This abuses the Baptist principle of church government by the members themselves.

### G. How does an association or convention/union work?

The member churches send their messengers to the annual meeting of the convention/union or association. The meeting has times of preaching, singing and witnessing. The number of messengers depends upon the size of the church. The meeting decides what the work will be and determines its budget. The messengers receive reports from the work. All of the messengers cannot meet every time a decision must be made. Therefore, they elect leaders and committees. The executive committee represents the larger group between annual meetings.

#### 1) What is the work of the leaders?

Generally, the leaders elected are a moderator or chairman and his assistant, a treasurer and his assistant, a secretary and his assistant. These should be elected according to the constitution. They should be mature men, proven leaders and of unquestionable spiritual qualifications. The work of each leader should be included in a job description. The leader can speak for or commit the association or convention/union only to that which has been approved by the group. The group or its representative committee has that authority between annual meetings. The executive committee should oversee the work of its leaders and help them where it can. However, leaders need to be careful of their position and power of influence. For example, if a committee

fails to do its work for various reasons, a leader, to keep the work going, may make a recommendation or take an action for the committee. When he does this, he may be accused of controlling the work.

## 2) What is the work of the executive committee?

The messengers of the churches meet once a year. Those messengers make decisions about the Lord's will in fulfilling their purpose. At the annual meeting, the group elects its executive committee. This committee should come from all areas of the work. The executive committee meets during the year on a regular basis to conduct business of a routine type. They receive reports, act upon the necessary matters and make recommendations to the churches. The committee cannot make it necessary for the churches to do something they have not decided. Generally, the churches agree with decisions of the executive committee. But a church always has the right to refuse to participate in a decision made by the executive committee.

The number of churches will determine the size of an executive committee of an association. The representation on the executive committee of a convention/union is more limited. On a convention executive committee, a specific number of members may be selected from churches of an association. However, it should be remembered that churches, not associations, are members of the convention/union.

## H. Are the association and convention/union independent groups?

Yes, each group—a church, an association or a convention/union—is an autonomous group. Autonomous means that "it controls itself." The church is the foundation of all Baptist groups. The association and the convention/union exists to help the churches. The churches give their association or convention/union certain responsibilities. The association or convention/union determines what they believe to be God's will through the vote of the messengers. This is done at the annual meeting. Most associations or conventions/unions have an article in their constitution similar to this: "While independent and free in its own area of work, the association or convention/union does not claim and will not try to control any other Baptist group." The group with this in its constitution cannot abuse the freedom of a church. Each group follows the will of God as decided by the majority of its members. Baptists do not force a church to do something against its will.

## **2. Should Baptists Work With Other Denominations?**

There are many Christian denominations. Some have similar beliefs as Baptists. Jesus rebuked his disciples for prohibiting the preaching by others who were not in their group. Jesus said, "...Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:50). Even though some others do not agree with Baptists, they should be loved because they love Jesus too. Baptists should not seek to get members from other churches. If a problem begins, the leaders should get together in love and solve the problem. Such a problem, if allowed to continue, will give a bad witness in the community. Churches should be seeking members from the lost, not from other churches. Here are some principles for working together with other denominations.

A. Cooperation which helps the church's purpose can be good.

Cooperation means "working together." Cooperation that helps the church fulfil its purpose is good. The church needs to decide on each issue. If the church has a purpose and a goal toward which it is working, then it knows when cooperation can help their church.

B. Cooperation can have a corrective effect.

Working with other denominations, Baptists can learn that others too, love and seek to serve Jesus. Baptists can learn from their beliefs. Others can learn from Baptists beliefs. Learning comes from examining each others beliefs. This makes Baptists do more Bible study. As the biblical teachings on the subject are determined, Baptists' beliefs become more like those found in Scriptures.

C. Cooperation can be a good witness to the non-Christians in the community.

Non-Christians are often troubled by so many different denominations. They think that Christians cannot fellowship with each other. If the churches in an area are fighting between themselves, there is a bad witness. Churches of the community should work together when possible to show unity in Christ.

## **3. What Should Be the Church's Relationship to the National Government?**

A. The ideal principle is:

1) A free church

A free church is a church governed by its members. Of

course, there are laws of the land with which the church must comply. These laws provide order to the society in which the church exists. However, the government should not enter the area of spiritual matters. For example, in the history of some countries, the government only permitted worship in one denomination. Baptists have opposed an official national denomination. Baptists want freedom for people to worship in the way which meets their spiritual needs.

## 2) A free nation

A free nation is a nation governed by its people. Baptists believe the people of a nation with God's leadership are capable of governing themselves. In Christian history, there are some bad examples of the church controlling the government. Baptists oppose this. The purpose of a church is in the spiritual and moral welfare of the people, not in political power.

## 3) Separation of church and national government

A free church in a free nation means that each is free. There is separation between them. The national government does not control the church in spiritual matters, and the church does not control the government in political matters. The church must follow the laws of the nation, especially those which give order to societies. The church must follow land ownership laws and building laws. The government of a country should be moral and upright. It is concerned about the welfare of the people. It respects the rights of the minority as well as the majority. The church and the national government are separate but concerned about each other.

## B. Areas of mutual concern of churches and government are:

### 1) Stability in the country

Both the church and the government are concerned with stability of the nation. In a nation where there is no political stability, the people suffer. Stability is important for development.

### 2) Welfare of the people

All governments are concerned with educational, medical and developmental needs. The churches also are concerned with these. Many churches have schools, medical work, development and other programs to improve the welfare of the people. The welfare of the people is a concern of the church and of the government.

### 3) Honesty and integrity of those in public service

The life of Christ is the best example of honesty, integ-

riety and unselfish service. The church is to be an example of Christ. The church seeks the salvation of others so they can become like Christ. Any form of government must take action against corruption. A very corrupt government remains in power generally by force. The people of a nation suffer when the church and the government are not concerned about honesty and integrity.

**C. Christians have responsibility to their government.**

In the New Testament, the government was not ideal. The Romans ruled many people besides Romans. Many of the people were abused and made slaves to serve the Romans. Yet Jesus tells us to give unto Caesar the things which are his (Matthew 22:21). We are told in the epistles to obey, to honor, to pay taxes, to do right and to refuse to use your freedom as a cover for evil in your responsibilities as a citizen (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-3; 1 Peter 2:13-17). It is easier to do these things in a free nation. In any nation, free or not, Christians must live the way that the Bible teaches.

**4. What Have We Studied About Church Relationships?**

1. There is no biblical example given for us to follow for our denominational structure. Therefore, church and denominational government must follow biblical teachings.

2. Independent churches—which depend upon each other, freely work together and respect each other's rights—follow biblical principles.

3. The association and convention or union exist to help the churches fulfil their purpose. These groups are both free and self-governing. They cannot force their will upon a church.

4. Cooperation with other denominations should be an example of Christian brotherhood.

5. A free church in a free nation is a biblical ideal.

**OUTLINE  
CHAPTER TEN**

- 1. What Type of Agreements Should a Church Make?**
  - A. A church covenant
  - B. A statement of faith
  - C. A church constitution
  
- 2. What Records Should a Church Keep?**
  - A. A church record book
  - B. A church finance record
  
- 3. Should a Church Have Special Groups Within It?**
  - A. Bible study groups (or Sunday School classes)
  - B. Choir (or choirs)
  - C. Youth groups
  - D. Women's groups and men's groups
  
- 4. What Have We Studied About Church Agreements, Records and Organizations?**

## CHAPTER TEN

### CHURCH AGREEMENTS, RECORDS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Should the members of a church have any type of agreements and records? What kind of agreements should they make? What type of records should they keep and why? Should a church have groups within the membership? What type of groups should a church have and why? In this chapter, we want to look at agreements, records and groups every church should have.

#### 1. What Type of Agreements Should a Church Make?

A church should make some agreements as soon as they become a church. A church covenant, a statement of faith and a church constitution are important agreements. These are made to help the members relate to each other. These agreements list the responsibilities to each other and to the church. They help to prevent problems and to serve as a guide in solving them.

##### A. A church covenant

###### 1) Purpose of the church covenant

A church covenant is an agreement between members concerning their relationship with each other. If church members do not have a basic agreement, then how will they know their responsibilities to one another? The covenant is very biblical. God established covenants with his people. As a church, you should follow his example and establish a covenant. Each church should write its own covenant. Here is an example of a church covenant.

###### 2) Example of a church covenant

##### Our Church Covenant

We believe that we have been led by the Spirit of God, to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord. After our profession of faith, we have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Now in the presence of God and each other, we make a covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

##### For the Progress of This Church

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will walk together in Christian love. We will work for the progress of this church, in

knowledge, holiness and strength. We will support its success and spirituality. We will keep its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines.

### **As Christian Stewards**

We will give regularly and happily to the support of the pastor. We will pay the expenses of the church. We will help the poor. We will support missions to share the gospel through all nations.

### **Alone and at Home**

We will spend time in Bible study and prayer each day. We will teach our children the ways of God. We will seek to lead our family and friends to accept Jesus as Lord.

### **Before the World**

We will walk carefully before others. We will be just in our affairs, faithful in our promises and an example in our actions. We will avoid all gossip, telling bad things about others and being very angry. We will depend upon our Lord Jesus for happiness, not upon drinking liquor, drugs or things of this world. We will work hard in every way we can to help the kingdom of God to grow.

### **With Each Other**

We will help each other in brotherly love. We will remember each other in prayer. We will help each other in sickness and problems. We will show our love for each other in words and actions. We will be slow to feel hurt by others and ready to make things right following the teachings of our Lord.

### **When We Move**

If we move, we will join another church soon where we will be guided by God's Word. We will continue to live in covenant with God and his people in that place.

## **B. A Statement of Faith**

### **1) Purpose of a Statement of Faith**

A statement of faith should be made. The purpose for this is to give a summary of what the church believes. Many people become Baptists who were members of other denominations.

They sometimes bring some of the teachings from their previous denomination into the church. A church should have a clear statement as to what it believes. It is important to have such an agreement when the church starts. When a person becomes a member, he will know the beliefs of the church. The statement may be short or long according to the desire of the church. An example of a long statement is The Baptist Faith and Message. Here is an example of a short statement of faith. A church should write its own statement. It may use the following as an example to follow.

## 2) Example of a short Statement of Faith

### Some Beliefs We Love

1. We believe the Bible is God's Word to people. It is the only dependable authority for a Christian's faith and actions.
2. We believe that church members should be born-again. The new birth must be before church membership.
3. We believe that the New Testament teaches the baptism of believers only by immersion. Baptism is a symbol of the gospel message—the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. We believe that the New Testament Christians were baptized before taking the Lord's Supper.
5. We believe in the right of each member of the church to share in its government, plans and discipline. Government of a Baptist church is by its members without control from those outside the church.
6. We believe that a person is free to make his own decisions about religion without being forced by others.
7. We believe the church should govern itself and work with other churches as the Holy Spirit leads.
8. We believe in the total independence and separation of church and national government.

## **C. A Church Constitution**

### **1) Purpose of a church constitution**

The church covenant guides the spiritual relationships of the church. The purpose of the church constitution is to guide the business matters and to state the purposes of the church. The church, as a group of people, needs to give thought to how it does its business. Its constitution should include an explanation of the articles listed next.

### **2) Example of a church constitution**

**\* \* \* \* \***

#### **Article I Name**

#### **Article II Articles of Faith**

(Some churches may want to include a short summary; others may want a complete statement).

#### **Article III Church Covenant**

#### **Article IV Character**

**Section 1. Polity (form of church government)**

**Section 2. Doctrine**

### **BY-LAWS**

#### **Article I Membership**

**Section 1. Qualification**

**Section 2. Duties**

**Section 3. Rights**

**Section 4. Quorum**

**Section 5. Termination;**

**Section 6. Restoration**

#### **Article II Church Officers**

**Section 1. Pastor (This should include how he is called, terminated and what his duties are).**

**Section 2. Deacons (This should include the number, selection, terms of service and duties).**

- Section 3. Moderator (This should identify the person by his position—pastor, chairman of deacon or another—and the responsibilities).
- Section 4. Clerk (This should include manner of selection, duties and terms of service).
- Section 5. Treasurer (This should include manner of selection, duties and to whom that one is responsible).
- Other positions which the church has should be included if desired.

### Article III Committees

The regular committees should be listed. This should state how they are selected, the number of members, duties and other items necessary.

### Article IV Church Finance

The church should give a clear understanding of its financial matters. The spending of money, accounting, reports and other financial matters the church desires should be included.

### Article V Meetings

- Section 1. Worship  
Section 2. Business

### Article VI Discipline

### Article VII The Church Council (or Committee)

The church may choose a council or committee made of elected leaders of church groups. They are responsible to plan, coordinate and direct the program of the church.

### Article VIII Amendments

This states how the constitution and by-laws may be amended.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are other examples of church constitutions. It would be wise to obtain several different copies to assist the church in writing theirs.

### 3) Principles concerning a church constitution

- a. The equality of members should be protected.
- b. The rights of members should be assured.
- c. The regenerate nature of church membership should be guarded.
- d. The way that the church will conduct its business should be clearly written.

## 2. What Records Should a Church Keep?

### A. A church record book

#### 1) Purpose of a church record book

Each church should keep an accurate record of their church decisions and their members. The church record book should record the decisions of the church. It should list the church members. It should show how each person became a member and how he or she leaves the church. This record book is of great importance. Only those whose names have been recorded are members of the church. Only these should be allowed to take part in the decisions of the church. Often we forget what was decided in a meeting. With a good record, the church will know what its decisions were.

#### 2) Principles concerning the church record book.

##### a. A church should keep records from its beginning.

These records are important. Later they will know who started the church and how it began, as well as the decisions made.

##### b. A church should choose a clerk to keep the records.

The church clerk keeps the records of all the business of the church. This person is responsible for the membership role. He records the names, dates and method of each person's becoming a member. He should also record how each member leaves the church. The clerk should write a letter to those churches that ask for information on a member who joins their church. This information is given by the church in a business meeting. Therefore, the clerk must be faithful in attendance.

##### c. The record should be kept in a safe place.

If a safe place cannot be found, it would be wise to make a copy. The church should make sure that the new clerk is given the record book.

d. The clerk should learn how to keep the church records.

The new clerk should have the work of keeping this record book explained carefully. The pastor should check to see if the new members have been recorded correctly.

## B. Church finance record

### 1) Purpose of a church finance record

The church finance record serves an important purpose. The members give their tithes and offerings. They have worked for that which they give. The church should keep a good record of their gifts. The church that does not keep a good, clear and accurate record of its receipts and expenses will soon have problems. Church members are unwilling to give when they do not know what happens to their offerings.

### 2) Principles concerning a church finance record

#### a. Totals of amounts received should be recorded.

The church receives money for many reasons. Therefore, an accurate record should be kept showing the total received for each thing. This helps the church to use the money it has received for the purpose for which it was given.

#### b. Receipts should be obtained

To protect the treasurer, receipts should be required every time he pays anything. Receipts are important to prove where the money has been spent.

#### c. Monthly reports should be given to the church.

In this way members know that the church finance records are open to honest questions. The treasurer should make his report to the church monthly. When there are unanswered questions, there can be doubt, distrust and untrue rumours.

d. Money should be used only according to the budget of the church.

The money belongs to the church. By making a budget, the church decides how it is used. The treasurer should not be asked to pay for something that is not in the budget. There are needs that are not in the budget. The finance committee should make a recommendation on such needs to the church.

**e. Money should be set aside for missions first.**

Christians ought to give unto God what is his first. The church should give to missions first. The church which does not do this is like a member who does not give to God first. Can such a person look for a blessing from God? Can such a church look for a blessing from God?

**f. The pastor should not handle the money.**

Many churches have problems over money. Therefore, it is best if the pastor does not handle the money. The finances should be carefully recorded and controlled by the church. If they are, the pastor is free from charges of misuse of funds.

**g. A committee should count the money, and the amount received by the treasurer should be recorded by a receipt.**

If the treasurer must count the money, problems may arise. It is best for a group to receive the money and count it. The treasurer should give them a receipt.

**3. Should a Church Have Special Groups Within It?**

A church that has grown will have many groups which meet special needs. These groups are not independent of the church. Since they are in the church, they are under the control of the church. Each group in the church has freedom to do many things. However, because they will represent the church, they must be subject to the decisions of the church. A church should have some or all of these groups.

**A. Bible study groups (or Sunday School classes)**

1) Bible study groups have two purposes. Their first purpose is to teach people the Bible. The second purpose is to help the members tell others about Jesus. Members who study the Bible and share the good news of Jesus grow in the faith.

2) The Scriptures are studied because the Bible is our final authority.

3) The church should train teachers to teach the Bible study groups. They should be trained to lead the class in telling others about Jesus. There should be Bible study groups for all ages, including adults.

4) Each Bible study group should keep good records. Good records help the group in visiting others.

## **B. Choir (or choirs)**

- 1) The purpose of a choir is to help the church in its music.
- 2) A choir can help the church in biblical education. Therefore, it is important to use songs that teach biblical truths.
- 3) A choir is a good way to reach people for Christ.
- 4) The choir leader must be a person who understands his faith and knows music. He needs to be humble and dependable.

## **C. Youth groups**

- 1) They give opportunity for spiritual growth to youth.
- 2) They give youth opportunities for Christian fellowship.
- 3) They can develop mature Christians. This is important to the future of the church.

## **D. Women's groups and men's groups**

- 1) They can help the church to grow in Bible knowledge.
- 2) They can help in missions and evangelism.
- 3) They can have special studies to meet their needs.
- 4) They need to guard against becoming a closed group. The groups need to welcome new people into the group and make them feel at home.

## **4. What Have We Studied About Church Agreements, Records and Organizations?**

1. Each church should write its own covenant and statement of faith. A church constitution is highly recommended.

2. Good records, such as the church record book and church finance record, can prevent many problems in the church.

3. Special groups in the church, such as choirs, youth, women's groups and men's groups, can help the church to grow in the knowledge of God's word and reaching others for Christ.

4. All leaders, officers and groups of the church are under the authority of the whole church.

## **QUESTIONS and ANSWERS**

### **Chapter One**

You can read more about Baptists in Christian history in chapter one.

1. Why do Baptists believe that they are members of a New Testament church?

A New Testament church follows the teachings of the New Testament. Baptist churches do this.

2. Why do Baptists believe the lordship of Christ is more important than even baptism?

The most important biblical teaching is that Jesus is Lord. It is of no value to baptize a person who does not accept Jesus as Lord.

3. What were some important teachings and customs of the New Testament churches?

These are: Jesus is Lord; salvation is by faith alone; baptism of believers is by immersion; church members are to be mature.

4. What wrong teachings developed which left the New Testament teachings?

Some were: to be a church member was the same as being in the kingdom of God; to be baptized was the same as to become a Christian; to be a priest (or pastor) was the same as being over the members; to follow a church council decision was the same as following the teachings of the New Testament.

5. When was the word, Baptist, first used to identify a church?

The first use of the word, Baptist, for a church was in 1609. The foundation for their beliefs is found in the New Testament.

6. How many Baptists are there in the world?

According to totals given by the Baptist World Alliance in 1980, there are over 30 million.

## **Chapter Two**

You can read more about the New Testament church in chapter two.

### **7. What is a church?**

A church is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.

### **8. Who is the foundation of the church?**

Jesus Christ alone is the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11)

### **9. What phrases show the trinity of God in the church?**

Three of these phrases are: the people of God, the body of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

### **10. Should there be only one church with local congregations?**

No, Scriptures will not support this teaching. Over 90% of the times the word, church, is used in the New Testament, it means a local church. These usually met in the homes of Christians.

## **Chapter three**

You can read more about the purpose of the church in chapter three.

### **11. What is the purpose of a church?**

The church is a fellowship of baptized believers who are commanded to make disciples.

### **12. What is involved in making disciples?**

Evangelism and edification. Evangelism is telling others about Jesus. Edification is teaching the new believer the way of God.

### **13. What type of church does a community need?**

Every community needs a church which has members who have been born-again. It needs a church which has a ministry like the ministry of Jesus and which has spiritual power.

**14. Should a church examine itself?**

Yes, a church should ask itself, "Are we winning people to Christ?" and "Are we helping them to grow in the faith?"

**Chapter Four**

You can read more about Baptist beliefs in chapter four.

**15. What are beliefs that separate Christians from non-Christians?**

Christians believe in the incarnation of Jesus, that is that he was God in the flesh, and in the atonement, which is the saving work of Christ. These provide the way of salvation for those who accept Jesus by faith.

**16. What are the beliefs that separate Baptists and others from the Roman Catholic Church?**

These are: only the Scriptures are dependable for faith and customs; salvation is by faith alone; every believer is a priest.

**17. What are some important beliefs and customs for Baptists?**

These include: Jesus is Lord; Scriptures are the believer's final authority; salvation is by personal faith in Jesus; church members should be only those who have been born-again; Christians have freedom with responsibility to do the Lord's will; each member is an evangelist.

**Chapter Five**

You can read more about the church ordinances in chapter five.

**18. What are the ordinances of Christ for a church?**

They are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**19. Does baptism save a person?**

No, baptism is for believers only. It is a symbol of God's blessings one has already received.

**20. Do those who take the Lord's Supper receive special grace?**

No, the Lord's Supper is a symbolic meal for those who have already received God's grace.

**21. Does ordination give authority over the ordinances?**

No, the ordinances should be under the control of the church.

**22. Can anyone share in the ordinances?**

No, they are for believers only.

### **Chapter Six**

You can read more about church membership in chapter six.

**23. Who can be a member of a Baptist church?**

Membership is limited to born-again, baptized believers.

**24. What biblical principles should guide the relationship among church members?**

Equality (Galatians 3:28) and brotherhood (Mark 3:35).

**25. As a church member, do you have any responsibilities?**

Yes, you are responsible for using your spiritual gift for the good of the church. You are to support your church. You are responsible for telling others about Jesus and teaching them.

**26. How should you support your church?**

You are to support your church through your prayers, your tithes and offerings, your faithful attendance, your encouragement of others and your responsible decisions.

**27. What are the results of mature church membership?**

These are: good fellowship, spiritual growth and strength.

## Chapter Seven

You can read more about church leadership in chapter seven.

28. Why do Baptists use "pastor" instead of "bishop" or "elder?"

Baptists use pastor because it best describes his work. He should be an elder which means a respected leader. He is a bishop because he oversees the spiritual growth of the members.

29. What should a church leader be?

He should be spiritual, wise and respected (Acts 6:3).

30. What does the New Testament teach about the nature of a church leader?

He is a servant, a "priest among priests" and is committed to Christ.

31. Should a leader be appointed by someone other than the members themselves?

No, a church leader should be selected by the members of the congregation. This is done under the leadership of the Spirit according to the needs of the church and the leader's qualifications.

32. What is ordination?

Ordination is a recognition of a person's call of God, his spiritual gifts and his understanding of spiritual and biblical matters.

33. Does ordination give a pastor special power, privileges or authority?

No, Baptists believe that it is God who calls and gives the pastor, the gifts necessary to fulfil the calling. Ordination is a symbolic act; it does not transfer special power, privilege or authority.

34. Why do Baptist preachers not wear a priest's collar or robes?

Clothing of this type is used to show a separation between the members and the pastor. Baptists believe strongly that there should be no separation between the members and the pastor.

**35. Are pastors more spiritual or holy than the members?**

A pastor is to be an example of the believer. However, all Christians are "priests" and therefore are responsible to be an example as well.

**36. Should pastors be paid?**

Yes, the Bible teaches the church should support its pastor.

**37. Who should pay the pastor?**

The church is responsible to pay him.

**38. How much should the pastor be paid?**

He should receive approximately what the majority of the members receive.

**39. How often should the pastor be paid?**

This is the decision of the church. Some pay every week, and others pay every month.

**40. Should the association, convention or union pay the pastor?**

No, the pastor of a local church should be paid by that church.

## **Chapter Eight**

You can read more about church government in chapter eight.

**41. What form of church government does a Baptist church follow?**

Baptists believe in local church government by the members. Their government is based upon equality, freedom and brotherhood.

**42. Does the New Testament give an exact type of church government?**

No, in the New Testament the selection of qualified leaders seemed more important than with an exact form of church government.

43. How do we know what form of church government we should use?

The New Testament does not give a specific example. Therefore, we must have a church government which is in keeping with its teachings. A church government should not abuse the spirit of brotherhood among the believers or their spiritual freedom.

44. Are there biblical examples of members making decisions?

Yes, see Acts 6, 13 and 15.

45. What are some important principles of Baptist church government.

Three are: membership is by free choice; members are the same before God; churches are free to make their own decisions.

46. What are some problems that occur in the government of a Baptist church?

There are these: a member wanting to control the church members wanting to do whatever they choose; members wanting others to govern the church.

47. Is freedom the opportunity to do anything we choose?

No, this is not freedom. If everyone did whatever they choose, there would be trouble.

48. What are some important principles for good church government in a Baptist church?

The church should use committees as needed. Every member should take part in the discussion before a decision is made. Each member is to work for the progress of the church.

### Chapter Nine

You can read more about church relationships in chapter nine.

49. How does a Baptist church work with other Baptist churches?

A Baptist church works with other Baptist churches in associations, conventions and unions.

50. What is an association or a convention/union?

An association (or convention/union) is a group of churches of similar beliefs and customs that have joined together for fellowship and service to the glory of God.

51. Is membership in an association, convention or union by free choice?

Yes, this is a basic Baptist teaching.

52. What principles are needed to build a strong association?

Depending upon each other without abusing the freedom of another is important. Working together gives the denomination life. Membership and cooperation is by free choice. The rights of others must be respected.

53. What needs do churches have which working together helps?

Churches need fellowship, doctrinal identity, strength in the work, education and development. Working together in associations, conventions or unions helps fulfil these needs.

54. Can individuals be members of an association, convention or union?

No, only Baptist churches may become members.

55. Can an association, convention or union tell a church what to do?

No, Baptists believe that churches are governed by the members themselves. Therefore, another group can only ask a church to do something.

56. How does an association, convention or union work since all of the members cannot meet everytime a decision is to be made?

The messengers to the annual meeting select their leaders and an executive committee. These are to see that what the messengers voted to do is done and to oversee this work. They take care of any new problems or needs that develop between the annual meetings.

**57. Can a leader or committee speak for a whole group?**

Any leader or committee may only speak for themselves. They may also say that which the group has instructed them to say.

**58. Are the association, convention/unions independent groups?**

Yes, this means they govern themselves. No other group has control over them. They are free to do God's will as led by the Spirit.

**59. What principles should guide working together with other denominations?**

These are: cooperation should fulfil the purpose of the church; cooperation may help biblical understanding; cooperation can give a witness to the non-Christians.

**60. What should be the relationship between the churches and the national government?**

The ideal principle is a free church in a free nation. Each is concerned about but are not controlled by the other.

**61. What are mutual concerns of churches and the government?**

Both are concerned with stability in the country, with the welfare of the people and with honesty and integrity of those in public service.

**62. Do Christians have responsibilities to their government?**

Yes, Christians are to be good citizens. They are to pray for the leaders and to be in all things an example of Christ.

## **Chapter Ten**

You can read more about church agreements, records and groups in chapter ten.

**63. Should a church have agreements?**

Yes, the wise church has a covenant, constitution and a basic statement of faith.

**64. Should a church write its own agreements?**

**Yes, a church should write its own agreements. The members should make sure the agreements written express the desires, beliefs and customs of that church.**

**65. Should a church keep records?**

**Yes, a church record book and a church financial record should be kept.**

**66. What should be included in the church record book?**

**The church clerk should record all church decisions. There should be a list of church members showing when and how each one became a member. When and how one leaves the church is to be included.**

**67. Is a good financial record necessary?**

**Yes, good records prevent unnecessary problems.**

**68. Should a church have groups within it which minister to the needs of member?**

**Yes, Bible study groups, choirs, youth, women's and men's groups can help the church to grow.**

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Many have asked, "Who are the Baptists?", "What do Baptists believe?" or "Why do they do the things they do?" This book explains who Baptists are, what they do and why they do things the way they do.

This book is the result of a request made by Baptist Church Developers in Eastern Africa. They believe a book of this nature would help answer these questions about Baptists. The author seeks move from the biblical to the practical. He seeks to answer many of the problems facing churches and church leaders in new areas of Baptist work.

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