

What You Should Ask the Local Church

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

Fellowship

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

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- Eph. 4:11-13, 16 - “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ... 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

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- 1Cor. 14:4, 16, 19, 23-24 - “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church... 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? ... 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue... 23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.”

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

- How does the local church practice unity?
- In matters of *personal faith*, tolerance, because God commanded it.
 - Rom. 14
 - 1Cor. 8

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

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

What You Should Ask The Local Church

- Does the example of the preacher and elders encourage reverence in worship?
 - 1Tim. 2:8 - “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”
 - Mal. 1:11-13 - “‘For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,’ Says the LORD of hosts. 12 ‘But you profane it, In that you say, “The table of the LORD is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.” 13 You also say, “Oh, what a weariness!” And you sneer at it,’ Says the LORD of hosts. ‘And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?’ Says the LORD.”

Fellowship

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