

What You Should Ask the Local Church

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. 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.
 - 1. It should be noted and understood that fellowship can be both sinfully withheld or erringly extended.
 - 2. Asking questions can reassure us in our fellowship, it can highlight areas where fellowship can improve, or it can expose reasons why fellowship should not exist.
- B. 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.
 - 1. I do not have a right to fellowship in the local church, any more than a local church has a right to demand fellowship from me.
 - 2. Fellowship is not unconditional; if the local church or I do not meet those conditions, fellowship does not or ceases to exist between us.

I. WHAT YOU SHOULD ASK THE LOCAL CHURCH

- A. What is the church doing to reach the lost and edify the saved?
 - 1. The work of the local church is to teach the lost and edify the saved
 - a. 1Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:11-13, 16; 1Cor. 14:4, 16, 19, 23-24
 - 2. The question should reveal not only the work in which the church is engaged, but their attitude toward it.
- B. What are some special focuses of the eldership, preacher, and members?
 - 1. What are the local needs specific to that area or work, and how are they meeting them?
 - 2. Lots of children require special attention to Bible classes; college town attention to reach students, industrial area service schedule for workers.
- C. Does the preacher have a structured, balanced pattern of sermon choice?
 - 1. Evangelists can become issue-oriented hobbyists, militant church destroyers, mercenary cotton candy peddlers, etc.
 - 2. Elders can arrange for or tolerate the same.
 - 3. New Testament preachers addressed both contemporary needs and long term edification.
 - 4. Their preaching was not abstract or informative only, nor was it always on the attack - 1John 4:1-3, 2:3-6, 3:1-3
 - 5. There is a mindset among some of our fellow disciples that believe that a preacher has to address error every time he opens his mouth. "Verse one; here's how the denominations get it wrong; verse two; here's how the liberals get it wrong..."
 - 6. This eldership emphasizes balanced preaching, and I am endeavoring to reduce your appetite for the sound of cannon fire, and increase it for the sound of harmonious, balanced Bible based preaching.
- D. How is the offering used?
 - 1. Used only for authorized work - 1Cor. 9:11-14; 1Tim. 5:16

2. What amount is being spent for the preaching of the Gospel?
- E. Does the church practice discipline?
 1. Discipline is both preventive and purifying - 1Thes. 5:14; 2Thes. 3:6
 2. Some local churches have never practiced local church discipline.
 3. Churches that do it well seldom have to do it at all.
- F. How does the local church practice unity?
 1. In the faith, unity, because it is absolute - Eph. 4:2-6; Gal. 6:1-2
 2. In our faith, patience, because it is growing - 1Thes. 5:14
 3. In matters of personal faith, tolerance, because God commanded it
 - a. Rom. 14; 1Cor. 8
- G. What is taught and practiced regarding moral issues: marriage, divorce, and remarriage, abortion, homosexuality, substance abuse, pornography, etc?
 1. Rev. 2:12-14
- H. What is the understanding and practice regarding the work of elders?
 1. They are not unapproachable dictators - 1Peter 5:3; 1Tim. 5:17
- I. Are plans actively in place to appoint elders and deacons in the future?
 1. A local church without scriptural elders is incomplete.
 2. Titus 1:5; Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23
- J. Does the example of the preacher and elders encourage reverence in worship?
 1. The way we conduct ourselves in worship is a reflection of our sincerity of heart and the authenticity of our worship. A casual environment usually indicates spiritual indifference, laziness, and is a classic form of passive rebellion.
 2. It means something to God; therefore, it should mean a lot to us.
 3. 1Tim. 2:8; Mal. 1:11-13

Conclusion:

- A. Fellowship is one of our greatest blessings, but we must always work to keep it so - Psalm 133:1-3