

QUESTIONS ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT

1. Why do we have a guarded table?

Answer: We have a guarded table because Scripture excludes believers for the following reasons:

1. Immorality.....1st Corinthians 5:11
2. False doctrine.....2nd John 9-11
3. Evil associations.....1st Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9; 2 John 11

2. Do other groups of Christians have the Lord in their midst? If so, why aren't we there?

Answer: We are not called upon to judge if the Lord is in their midst, but we are responsible to judge if there is sin in their midst. If there is, we must remain separate from them (see 2nd Timothy 2:19-21).

3. What is unscriptural about breaking bread with a true believer on occasion?

Answer: There are at least two definite reasons why this would be wrong:

1. There could be no carrying out of assembly discipline in such a case, for the assembly can only exercise discipline towards those who are "within" (see 1st Corinthians 5:12).
2. Fellowship is always looked at as a *continual* course of action where one enjoys *all the privileges of assembly fellowship* (Acts 2:42).

4. How did people come into fellowship in the New Testament?

Answer: We see at the very beginning of the Assembly that immediately after souls were saved they automatically formed a fellowship based on the Apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:41,42). As time went on, those who were saved expressed a desire to identify with a local assembly (Acts 9:26). If he was unknown to the assembly, one or more would commend him to the assembly (Acts 9:27; 18:27). Their final reception though would be by the whole assembly agreeing to receive him (Matthew 18:18-20).

5. Why is the Lord's Supper the line of separation? Why is prayer, Bible study, evangelism, etc. acceptable with believers outside of our fellowship?

Answer: In the Lord's Supper we are expressing, in the one loaf, the truth of the one body (1st Corinthians 10:17). So, those who partake of it should be willing to identify with those who own this truth. It should also be pointed out that if one is not "in fellowship" they are not allowed to participate in other assembly meetings (see again Acts 2:42). We can have times of prayer and Bible study with other believers on a personal level, but not in assembly meetings.

6. What should believers do if they live in a place where there is no assembly associated with us? What if there are other gatherings of believers there?

Answer: There are no concrete examples of this in Scripture to follow, but from what we have already learned we believe that it would be wrong to associate with that which is not according to Scripture. One would still have the liberty to enjoy times of personal (individual) fellowship with other believers, but he should refrain from participating in any of their corporate meetings.

7. What is leaven and how can we be leavened? Is it practical, mystical, something else?

Answer: Leaven ALWAYS symbolizes evil in Scripture. It may be moral evil (1st Corinthians 5:6-8), or it may be doctrinal evil (Matthew 16:6,11,12). We are leavened (defiled) by associating with one who is immoral or who is teaching false doctrine (1st Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9). We should not be participating with them in assembly meetings or even socializing with them (1st Corinthians 5:11).

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8. How far does breaking bread carry association with sin? How long of a chain constitutes association?

Answer: If we break bread with one who is living in unjudged sin, the whole local assembly is defiled (see 1st Corinthians 5:6,7). If the assemblies that are in fellowship with the defiled assembly refuse to judge this, they too would be leavened according to the same principle. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians informing them of their failure to judge sin and exhorting them to put the evil doer out of fellowship. If they had refused to obey the Apostle, all other assemblies would have had to refuse fellowship with those at Corinth to avoid being defiled themselves.

9. What does it mean to link with or join with another group of believers? How does this happen?

Answer: To link ourselves with other believers is to have corporate fellowship with them, which means we would participate in their corporate meetings, or allow them to participate in our corporate meetings (this would not be limited to breaking bread with them, but would include participating in the forms of fellowship outlined in Acts 2:42.)

10. In N.T. times there was a unity of assemblies, how many assemblies were there? How did they maintain unity with large numbers and limitations in communications?

Answer: We learn from the book of Acts and the epistles that there were MANY assemblies formed, but this did not hinder them from expressing the truth of their oneness in Christ. I can think of at least three ways that they expressed this unity:

1. They wrote *letters of commendation* (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1; 2nd Corinthians 3:1).
2. The Apostles wrote *divinely inspired letters* to instruct them as to their unity.
3. The Apostles and other believers traveled to various assemblies to have fellowship with them, which gave expression to their unity.

11. What truths do we need to agree on for full fellowship? Where does disagreement require separation?

Answer: We MUST agree on the “doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9), which includes the truth as to His Person (His Deity and sinless humanity—1st John 2:22,23; 4:3) and His Work (what He accomplished on the cross). We must also agree on the truth of the Assembly in order to have corporate fellowship together (Acts 2:42).

12. How much independence of action does each assembly have? What decisions need to be run by other assemblies?

Answer: Each local assembly is responsible to govern itself (Matthew 18:15-20; 1st Corinthians 5:4,5,12,13). The actions of one local assembly is binding on all other assemblies, for heaven itself owns the authority of a local assembly (Matthew 18:18). If a local assembly fails to act responsibly, others outside of the assembly may step in to encourage them to act (1st Corinthians 5:1-5).

13. What are elders, deacons, and overseers? How do we know them? How are they appointed? Is there a Scriptural basis for not appointing them?

Answer: This is a vast subject, but in short *elders* and *overseers* are men that God raises up to bear oversight in a local assembly (see Acts 20:17,28; 1st Peter 5:1-3). The word “elder” refers to their age and the word “overseer” to the work that they do. We know them by the work that they do (1st Thessalonians 5:12,13) and by the qualifications they have (1st Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In the early church they were appointed by Apostles (Acts 14:23) or Apostolic delegates (Titus 1:5), so today there is no authority for appointing them. This does not mean we do not have overseers today, for it is the Holy Spirit Who raises up men for this work (Acts 20:28) and we can still discern who they are by the work that they do (1st Thessalonians 5:12,13).

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14. What is being slain in the spirit, lifting holy hands, and speaking in tongues?

Answer: I see no reference in Scripture to being “slain in the spirit.” That which goes by that expression today has no Scriptural justification. The phrase “lifting up holy hands” (1st Timothy 2:8) is speaking figuratively, I believe, of a man’s entire life. If one prays, it should be accompanied by a holy life, otherwise he prays hypocritically. The subject of “speaking in tongues” is too vast for much response here, but suffice it to say that it was a “sign gift” (Mark 16:17; 1st Corinthians 14:22) that involved speaking a language that one had never learned (Acts 2:4-11).

15. What is the doctrine of Christ? His teaching, or teaching about Him?

Answer: It is “teaching about Him.” John’s 1st and 2nd epistles dealt with this in-depth, for there were those who were denying that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (1st John 4:3), which denied both His Deity and Incarnation. They did not believe that Jesus was the eternal Son of God (1st John 2:22,23), thus they did not “abide...in the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).

16. What is the gospel in Galatians 1:6-9? Is it the gospel in 1st Corinthians 15:1-8? Is it more, including church truth? Is it different than the doctrine of Christ?

Answer: The gospel set forth in Galatians (see 1:4; 2:16; 3:13; 4:4,5) is the same as the gospel in 1st Corinthians 15:1-4. The gospel contains “the doctrine of Christ,” for the Son of God became flesh in order to die for our sins (Galatians 4:4,5). Church truth is related to the gospel, for all who are saved become members of His body (Acts 2:47). In Galatians we see Peter failing to express our oneness in Christ and in so doing he was not walking “according to the truth of the gospel” (Galatians 2:11-14).

17. Is the leaven in Matthew 13:33 good or bad?

Answer: It is bad, for leaven ALWAYS symbolizes evil in Scripture (see Question #7...see also Exodus 12:15 for the first mention of leaven in Scripture).

18. Would we separate over a denial of eternal security?

Answer: Yes, for to deny eternal security is to undermine the finished work of Christ and the believer’s perfect standing “in Christ” (which is based on His perfect sacrifice on Calvary). To deny this truth is to rob Christ of His glory and the believer of the peace and enjoyment this truth brings.

19. Galatians 1 says another gospel makes one accursed. Is denying eternal security a gospel of faith plus works?

Answer: It is if one actually teaches that good works, in addition to faith, are necessary to be saved. Paul taught the Galatians that to add anything to faith in the finished work of Christ would result in losing the benefit of Christ’s death (Galatians 2:16; 5:2-4). Many professing Christians that deny the eternal security of the believer do not teach this; they usually teach that one can cease believing on Christ which in turns results in their returning to a life of sin and losing their salvation. This is very serious and as we saw in the last question it has terrible consequences.