



ALAMO CITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

A CHURCH FOR SEEKERS OF JESUS.

6500 IH 35 North
San Antonio, Texas 78218
(210) 654-7880
www.alamocity.org
Dr. David C. Walker - Pastor

ALAMO CITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

***“ALAMO CITY BASICS”* TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. BASIC BACKGROUND

II. BASIC BELIEFS

I. BASIC BACKGROUND

The Beginning... On Sunday night, October 25, 1987, Alamo City was born. The pregnancy was difficult, but the new baby has been a great joy! The birth came as the result of a decision made in a business meeting of the First Baptist Church of San Antonio in which Pastor David Walker, who had served First Baptist as pastor for almost four years, was relieved of his duties by a narrow vote of the congregation. There were no charges of moral misconduct or financial mismanagement or heresy, but there were evidences of enduring disagreement between the pastor and well-meaning members of the lay leadership as to the direction of the church. The authority of Scripture, the level of freedom in worship, and the role of the Holy Spirit were issues at the center of the concern. As Pastor Walker, his wife, Shirley, and their two small daughters, Abby and Katie, left First Baptist Church in compliance with the majority's wishes that night, so did close to 700 other members. Realizing that forgiveness and a heart for reconciliation are essential in the Kingdom of God, both have been and continue to be extended from Alamo City to our brothers and sisters still in the First Baptist Church who were a part of the proceedings in 1987. Much progress has been made over the years in healing the relationship between the two congregations, and for that we are grateful. How amazing is God's grace that He turns valleys of great pain into gateways of great blessing! We pray heaven's richest blessings upon the First Baptist Church of San Antonio, for if there had been no First Baptist, there would have been no Alamo City!

A Season Of "Firsts" The first service of the new church, not yet known as Alamo City, was held on November 1 at 10:30 a.m. at the Marriott North Hotel with over 1200 people in attendance. Plans were made on November 6 to lease Churchill High School as a temporary location for services. Services were held there beginning on November 15, and 492 people requested membership. The following Wednesday, prayer services were initiated in 14 homes around the city. The first full Sunday School was held on November 29, 1987. The first baptismal service was held at Shearer Hills Baptist Church on December 6 with 56 people being baptized. Also, on December 6, the church voted to be known as the Alamo City Baptist Church. As the calendar year closed, the church was officially chartered on December 27 and final figures for the two months of existence showed 850 members having joined the church.

The First Year Miracle Of The Mall Location... On January 17, 1988, three locations were presented as possible locations for a church home: Centeno Grocery on Fredericksburg, The Christmas Store on Rector, and the Texas Outlet Mall on 6500 IH 35 North. On January 31, the church voted to pursue the possible purchase of the Texas Outlet Mall. Requests by Alamo City to rent the mall were refused; the only option for use of the property was through direct purchase. On April 3, the six month old church voted to buy the mall for 5.8 million dollars. The property comprised 40 acres and one large 156,000 square foot building (which, incidentally, had been built in the shape of a cross!). The first "workday" to clean the building and ready it for use was April 30. The first service at the partially renovated former "discount mall" was on June 12, 1988. Attendance was more than 3,000 and Dr. Adrian Rogers (at that time, the President of the Southern Baptist Convention) was on hand to assist in the dedication. There was a covered dish luncheon after the morning service for the hundreds of pastors and their families who attended, while in San Antonio for the Southern Baptist Convention. The first baptismal service in the new location was on August 7 and 40 Believers followed the Lord in baptism.

Since The First Year... The Lord has graciously, by His Spirit, continued to work over the years at Alamo City. That the "manifest presence of Jesus" would be felt by all who walk among us is our consistent prayer. We have been blessed to see doors open to minister the love and truth of the Gospel through television, Bible Studies, men's and women's ministries, a food ministry which provides several hundred thousand pounds of food each year to the poor and needy, street evangelism, prison ministry, and worldwide mission efforts.



Alamo City has maintained membership in the Bluebonnet Baptist Association of Churches, a regional group of churches belonging to the Southern Baptist Convention. On March 3, 1996, the name was officially changed from *Alamo City Baptist Church* to *Alamo City Christian Fellowship*. In September of 1996 construction was begun on a new multipurpose recreational building and an additional 18 acres were purchased on the north property line to allow for expansion and parking.



Why the name *Alamo City Christian Fellowship*? The name was changed to place the person of Jesus Christ as the primary point of identification for the church. The doctrinal positions of the congregation remained unchanged, but there arose a longing in the heart of the pastor and the church to reflect our marriage to Jesus, as the Bride of Christ, by taking His name as our own in the name of the congregation. The issue was not so much the dropping of the name *Baptist* as much as the taking up of the name *Christian*. The step was not intended to be a slight to our Baptist heritage, nor as a mandate for other churches to do likewise; rather, it was, for us, obedience to a decision we believe the Spirit had specifically directed. It was Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest Baptist preachers who ever lived, who said... “I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ’s own name last forever. I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living” (Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol. 1 p.168). Mr. Spurgeon's heart ached with the hope that there would someday come such a unity within the Body of Christ and such an elevation of the centrality of the person of Jesus that all man-made, earth-bound labels would lose their power to divide the family of God, and that only one identifying name would reign supreme, the name of Christ. Such was the stirring of the Spirit through the midst of this body as the name was changed.

Alamo City Christian Fellowship

II. BASIC BELIEFS

OR

Statement of Faith

A “Statement of faith” is a collection of biblical principles that a body of Believers voluntarily unite under, accepting each principle as an essential God-given truth.

THE BIBLE

- * The Bible does not merely “contain” the Word of God; it “is” the Word of God - II Corinthians 2:17; Hebrews 4:12.
- * The Bible is “inspired” which literally means “God breathed” - II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21.
- * God’s Word is reliable, true, and eternal - Psalm 119:89; Matthew 5:18; I Peter 1:25.
- * The Word of God is not to be diluted with personal opinion or modified through traditions of men - Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:19.
- * The Bible is the infallible and inerrant Word of God - I Kings 8:56; Psalm 111:7; Ezekiel 12:25; Matthew 5:18.

GOD THE FATHER

- * God is the Creator of everything in existence - Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17.
- * God is an equal part of the Trinity - II Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 28:19.
- * God has attributes that define His divine nature:
 - > Omniscience (All-knowing) - Psalm 147:4-5
 - > Omnipresence (All-present) - Psalm 139:8
 - > Omnipotent (All-powerful) - Matthew 19:26
- * God is eternal: He always has been and always will be - Psalm 90:2; Psalm 102:24-27.

- * God is immutable; He does not change - Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.
- * God is holy - Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 99:9.
- * God is merciful - Psalm 103:8; Psalm 86:15.
- * God is love - I John 4:8-16; John 3:16.
- * God is a Heavenly Father to all who accept His plan of salvation - Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 4:4-7.

GOD THE SON, JESUS CHRIST:

- * Jesus was literally “God in the flesh.” He came to this earth born of a virgin. Jesus grew up in all respects as any child growing into manhood would - Isaiah 7:14; John 17:5; Colossians 1:15-19; Luke 2:52.
- * Jesus came as a “spotless lamb” in order to provide a once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin - Hebrews 10:1-10; I Peter 3:18; I Corinthians 5:7.
- * Jesus died on the cross to shed His blood as an atonement (payment) for the sins for everyone who would accept Him as Savior - Isaiah 53:6; II Corinthians 5:19; I Timothy 2:6; John 1:29.
- * Jesus was bodily resurrected from the tomb on the third day after His physical death on the cross - I Corinthians 15:3-4; Matthew 28:6.
- * Today Jesus is risen, exalted, and seated at the right hand of the Father. He is to be worshiped in spirit and truth. His name is to have singular importance to us. - Philippians 2:9; Ephesians 1:20-21; Colossians 3:1.
- * Jesus will return to this earth; for His bride - the true church, made up of those who from the heart believe in Him, and for the final judgment of the world - John 14:2-3; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:51-58; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 19:11-16.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

* The Holy Spirit is an equal part of the Trinity and has His own distinct personality and ministry - John 14:16; Acts 5:3-4; I Corinthians 2:9-11.

* Some of the works of the Holy Spirit are:

- > conviction of sin - John 16:8-11
- > bearing witness of Christ - Acts 5:32
- > spiritual new birth - John 3:3-5
- > indwelling of believers - Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19
- > sealing our salvation - Ephesians 1:13-14
- > filling of Believers - Ephesians 5:18
- > empowering Believers with the heart of Jesus - Galatians 5:22-23
- > granting and empowering spiritual gifts in believers - Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:11-16
- > guiding Believers - Romans 8:14
- > anointing Believers with special abilities for specific purposes - I John 2:27; Luke 4:18
- > authoring of the scriptures - II Peter 1:20-21
- > the Comforter for Christians - John 15:26; John 16:7
- > assisting the believer's prayers - Romans 8:26-27; Galatians 4:6.

A Brief Perspective on the Gifts of the Spirit

* The Holy Spirit is the sovereign Giver of spiritual gifts:

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:4,11).

* All the gifts of the Spirit are possible today, and may be dispensed to any believer as the Spirit chooses, either at the time of conversion or after, as in the case of Timothy: "And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).

* It is interesting to note that when the Spirit was poured out upon the Church in Acts 2 and 3000 were converted in one day, there is not a specific indication that the 3000 were necessarily visited by the same phenomena as were the 120 in the upper room. Peter instructed, "Repent and be baptized...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The statements in Acts 2 are silent as to whether any or all of the 3000 were then touched by tongues of fire or spoke with "other tongues". We do not know with certainty what the manifestations of the Spirit's coming upon the 3000 were; they may have spoken with "tongues" or they may have not. They could have, or they could have not -- both possibilities we believe still to be true in the Church today. But what we do know is that their hearts and lifestyles were radically changed by the coming of the Spirit, such that a love for prayer, an overflow of perpetual praise, an insatiable hunger for the apostle's teaching, and a compassion for each other absolutely consumed them (Acts 2: 42-47). No singular gift, then, can be said to be the proof of either the Spirit's baptism or His filling. It is the "unboxable" Spirit who distributes gifts "to each one individually just as He wills" and who "has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member [all had the same gift], where would the body be?" (1 Corinthians 12:18,19).

A Brief Perspective on the Baptism or Filling of the Holy Spirit

In the section below entitled, "Salvation," it is declared that being "born again" is impossible apart from the Holy Spirit's ministry within the sinner of bringing him to conviction of sin, awakening within him repentance (or a turning from his sins), granting faith in Christ's death as payment for his sins, and then bringing the life of Christ into his spirit.

There is, however, a further work of the Holy Spirit in empowering the believer for service or ministry in the Kingdom. This further work may occur almost simultaneously with the moment of his being "born again", or it may occur later as in the case of the 120 (in Acts 1:1-14, 2: 1-4) or the Apostle Paul (in Acts 9: 1-19). In both of these instances, the ones "receiving the Spirit" had been convicted of their sins, had repented, and were trusting Jesus as the Christ who had been put to death for their sins, was buried, and was raised again according to the Scriptures ("the Gospel" according to Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1-4). The living Jesus had come to them and spoken to them -- they certainly knew He was alive from the dead. According to Paul's listing of the ingredients of the Gospel that must be believed in order to be saved, they assuredly must have been convinced of each of them. They were "born again".

But what they needed beyond salvation was the Power of the Risen Christ to strengthen and enable them for the supernatural tasks assigned them. That they received in what has been alternately called the Baptism or the Filling of the Spirit. Our position is not to argue terms, but to appreciate the reality of the Father's desire that not only does He long for His children to be saved from their sins by faith in Jesus' death for them (one operation of the Holy Spirit within them), but also that their hearts be drenched in fire (Luke 3:16) and that they be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49) by the coming on them of the Spirit in power!

Such a drenching in fire (a burning in the heart of love for Jesus and a zeal to serve Him) and a clothing with power from on High for effective service, we earnestly believe, is one of the "new covenant" blessings that we are to fervently seek from the Lord.

The need for fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit may be repeated throughout our lives, as was the case with the Apostles in Acts 4: 23-31, and those times of great need are satisfied by the Spirit's heart to make real, continually within us, the life of the exalted Jesus (John 16: 14,15).

MAN

* Man was created by God in His own image - Genesis 1:26; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9.

* Outside of Jesus, every person who has ever lived has committed sin - Romans 3:10,23.

* Because of our sin nature (inherited from Adam) and the sins resulting from it, everyone will die physically and will then face eternal spiritual death if he/she has not accepted by faith Jesus Christ's death on the cross for his/her sins. - Romans 5:12,19; Psalm 14.

* Man is saved from the guilt and certain punishment of his sins by Grace (the offering up of Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world) and through faith (faith in the fact that Jesus was dying and did die for "my" sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised from the dead).

* Man was created with a physical nature ("... out of the dust was formed flesh") and man also has a spiritual nature ("... was breathed into him the breath of life") - Genesis 1:26; II Corinthians 4:16.

SALVATION

* Sin literally means to “miss the mark.” Sin is anything contrary to the character of God - as revealed in the Bible - Psalm 51:4; Luke 15:18.

* To sin or to rebel against God's laws is the very nature of all mankind; no one has to learn how to sin. All have sinned and need the Savior - Romans 3:10, 23; 5:8; Ephesians 2:3.

* The sin nature can “blind” a person so that the need for salvation is obscured - Ephesians 4:18; I Corinthians 2:14.

* From God's perspective, the plan to provide a way of escape from the certain eternal death all mankind faces because of their sin (Luke 16:19-31), has existed "from before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), and has become known to the world in the first coming of Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:10-14).

* On the human, experiential side, salvation for the individual begins with the Holy Spirit's convicting the heart of the sinner that he/she is guilty of breaking God's Law and rejecting Jesus Christ (John 16:8,9) and is, therefore, guilty of causing the death of Jesus of Nazareth, who came as "the Lamb of God" to "take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), who "was pierced through for our transgressions", "was crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5), and who "Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Peter 2:24).

* Repentance (a deep and remaining change of attitude toward "my sins" and toward the one true, living and holy God before whom I stand as guilty and condemned because of my sin) then rises in the sinner's heart by the steady working of the Holy Spirit, pointing the sinner toward his/her only hope to escape judgment and receive mercy -- the cross and empty tomb of Jesus Christ! (Luke 13:3, John 16:7-11, Acts 3:19)

* Specific and personal faith in Jesus Christ's shed blood on the cross in payment for "my" sins, and faith that He literally died and literally was raised from the dead is the only way that a person's sins can be forgiven in the eyes of God - Romans 5:8-9; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8,9; Colossians 1:13,14.

* All of salvation is all of God - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins" - incapable of any signs of spiritual life: unable to repent, powerless to produce the kind of faith in Christ's death that saves from sin, incapable of obeying God lastingly - the unbeliever is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), until God in His mercy and by His Spirit begins to bring life to a dead heart. Thus, "by grace (by God's enabling power and undeserved mercy) you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not the result of works, that no one should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

* The function of salvation is to make people new, not just make them behave. "Being saved" or being "born again" means not only being saved from the guilt and penalty of sins but also being saved from the power of sin to control a life. How? It is Jesus Christ, in the form of His invisible Spirit, actually alive in the bodies of those who have surrendered their lives to Him. His Presence changes us and keeps us changed! - II Corinthians 5:17; John 5:24; II Peter 1:4; Galatians 2:20.

THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

* Because the sinner is saved solely by the grace of God, he/she is kept "saved" by the same undeserved mercy of God. God has reached down (before the sinner ever reached up - Ephesians 2:1) and taken hold of the sinner's soul, rescued it, cleansed it, forgiven it through the death of Christ, and now possesses it through the indwelling Spirit. Since God is the One who initiated salvation, He is the only One who can terminate it, and He has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," (Hebrews 13:5). He also promised: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30). The picture of Salvation is not that of the sinner trying desperately to keep holding on to the Father's hand, but that of the Father graciously and powerfully gripping and holding on to the forgiven sinner's hand. The believer is secure eternally because it is the Father who is holding on to him/her, not because the sinner is fortunate enough in this life not ever to let his/her grip of faith or good works slip! It is BY GRACE that you have been saved! And that you are KEPT!

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

* The sinner is saved from sin on the basis of God-given faith in the facts of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3,4; 1:18); but the believer experiences the assurance in his/her heart that he/she is truly forgiven, cleansed and accepted as a child of God, and is treasured and precious to the Father as "the Spirit of adoption bears witness with (testifies jointly with) our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ..." (Romans 8:15-17).

* The assurance of salvation is singularly a manifestation of the Holy Spirit of Jesus at work in the believer convincing him of his place in the facts of the Gospel and revealing in the depth of his spirit the heart of Abba Father toward His child. "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:6-7).

THE CHURCH

* The word *church* comes from a Greek word (ecclesia) which means "called out ones." The true church is made up of all people who have accepted Jesus as Savior, followed Him in Believer's baptism, have, by the power of the Spirit, been rescued from the world's former control of their hearts and lives, and are seeking to live "in community" with one another - Matthew 16:18; Acts 4:32-37; I Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 2:1-6; 5:25-27; Romans 8:30.

* The primary characteristics of a New Testament church are found in Acts 2:

- > (V38) people were saved and baptized.
- > (V40) their affection was on things that would matter after death.
- > (V42) study - fellowship - breaking bread - prayer.
- > (V44) a strong bond of unity.
- > (V45) compassion was put into action.
- > (V46) frequent joining together for mutual encouragement.
- > (V47) consistent and exuberant praise to God.

* The church was founded *By* Jesus *For* Jesus - Matthew 16:16-18; Matthew 18:15-20; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7.

* Individuals are to come together as equal parts for the common good of the whole group. Each member of a church is a piece of the whole picture - Ephesians 4:1-4, 15-16; I Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-5.

* Members of a church are to take on responsibilities in order to serve the Lord through the body of believers they have joined with. It is the “teamwork” aspect of everyone having a part and contributing that makes a church more of a *living organism* than just an *organization*.

* Some of the important ministries of a church:

- > worship - Ephesians 1:4-6; Hebrews 13:15-16
- > evangelism - (sharing Jesus with those who need to know Him) Matthew 28:19-20
- > teaching/discipleship - Ephesians 4:11-15
- > use of spiritual gifts - Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:8-11
- > sharing generously - II Corinthians 8:5; II Corinthians 9:7; I Corinthians 16:2

* Scripture established the leaders of the local church as being pastors (elders) and deacons (servants) (1 Timothy 3:1-13). The pastors or elders are to oversee the total ministry of the church in the light of Biblical instructions, encouraging its spiritual health and maturity, and the deacons are to serve under the leadership of the pastors, tending to the tangible, material needs in the fellowship, thereby contributing to peace in the fellowship (Acts 6:1-6). Pastors and deacons must also be deeply committed to and actively involved in sharing the gospel (Acts 4:8-12; 6:8-7:60).

* The New Testament, in addition to its teaching regarding the local church, also speaks of the church as "the body of Christ," (1 Corinthians 12: 12-14) which includes all of the believers in Christ throughout the world, throughout all time (Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 5:9,10).

BAPTISM

* Baptism is a word that was brought out of the Greek language without being translated. The Greek word, "baptizo," means: plunge, immerse, submerge, to dip in entirety.

* Jesus was baptized to establish an example for believers to follow - Matthew 3:16-17.

* New believers were baptized following their repentance from their sins and putting their faith in Christ - Acts 2:37-41; 8:35-38.

* The New Testament teaches that sinners are forgiven and made right with God solely through faith in what Christ did for them on the cross (John 3:16-18; John 5:24; Acts 4:12; Acts 16:30-31; I Peter 1:18-23), not because they did something to earn forgiveness, such as by being baptized (Ephesians 2:8,9). Baptism does not wash away sin; it is purely a symbolic act, indicating that before entering the water, the one being baptized has been united by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ -- that he has died to sin and is embarking on a new way of life - Romans 6:3-11.

* Though baptism is symbolic, it is still a specific act of obedience, important for the sake of keeping the commands of Jesus -- "Repent and be baptized..." (Acts 2:38).

THE LORD'S SUPPER (COMMUNION)

* The Lord's Supper, also called communion, was instituted by Jesus - Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20; I Corinthians 10:16.

* The elements of communion are the *symbolic* body (the unleavened bread) and blood ("the fruit of the vine") of Christ. [Jesus often would use analogies to illustrate or emphasize a particular point - "I am the Vine" (John 15); "I am the Door" (John 10:9).]

* Throughout the New Testament, there are references made to believers taking communion - Acts 2:42-46; Acts 20:7.

* It is to be done in obedience to the instructions of Jesus - I Corinthians 11:23-26.

* The Lord's Supper is to be a time of examination and remembrance - I Corinthians 11:24-34; Mark 14:24.

* The Lord's Supper is to be a time of unity - I Corinthians 10:16-17; Luke 22:15.

WORSHIP

* Worship is not an activity of the mind, it is a response of the heart - Isaiah 43:21; Ephesians 1:6,12,14.

* Worship is essentially "worth-ship" and worship is due unto the Lord for He alone is worthy of worship - Revelation 4:11; Revelation 5:12; Hebrews 10:19-22.

* Authentic worship will have little or nothing to do with buildings, physical symbols, or other participants, but will focus entirely on the Lord - Acts 17; Psalm 100; John 4:22-24.

* Several key Hebrew words for worship express a more complete idea of what worship is:

> Yadah: to hold out the hand, to extend hands in reverence - Genesis 29:35; II Chronicles 7:6; Psalm 107:8.

> Halal: to be clear, to make a show, to boast, to rave over, to celebrate - I Chronicles 23:5; II Chronicles 20:19-21; Psalm 69:30.

> Barak: to kneel, to adore, to bless - Judges 5:2.

> Zamar: to strike with the fingers, to use an instrument or voice - Psalm 21:13; Psalm 57:7; Psalm 108:1.

> Shabach: to shout, to cry in a loud voice - Psalm 63:3; Psalm 117:16; Psalm 145:4.

* Worshiping the Lord may take many legitimate and appropriate forms:

- > Words - Psalm 9:1
- > Shouts - Psalm 95:1
- > Bowing - Psalm 95:6
- > Songs, Psalm - Psalm 104:33; Ephesians 19-20
- > Dance - Psalm 150:4; Psalm 149:3
- > Raised hands - Psalm 134:2
- > Stillness - Psalm 46:1
- > Sitting - 2 Samuel 7:18

* An inescapable key in true worship is that it be authentic, straight from the heart, and focused on the living God, who calls us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23) -- not hypocritically playing a religious game within ourselves or critically watching and judging the worship motives of others. Hands raised or lowered, voices loud or soft, feet standing or dancing -- all are possible postures of worship, but it is the condition of the heart that remains the most essential, and it is only the Spirit who can enable us to worship the Father "in spirit and in truth."

STEWARDSHIP

* According to the Scriptures, believers should recognize that everything we have is entrusted to us to use for the glory of God and for helping others. We should give of ourselves (Romans 12:1), and of our material possessions regularly (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), generously, and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6,7) for the advancement of the Kingdom of our dear Savior!

* It appears that the primary way of funding the spread of the Gospel in the first century was through tithes and offerings given through local churches, to assist men such as the missionary Paul and to meet needs such as famine relief (2 Corinthians 8,9; Philippians 4:14-19).

* The principle of giving generously through a local church, whose ministry and vision bear witness with the believer's personal convictions, using the tithe or the first 10% of our income as the beginning point, is a practice God faithfully blesses.

* Malachi 3:10 instructs, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."

* Acts 2:44-45 and 4:34-35 indicate that the Church became, evidently, "the storehouse" in which goods were gathered and then distributed by the apostles to the poor in the church: "For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need" (Acts 4:34-35).

* Paul lifts high the "Law of the Harvest" in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver."

THE PURITY OF THE FELLOWSHIP

* When a believer falls into sin and remains in it, not only is he being hurt, but the entire body of Christ is to some degree affected. Worst of all, the Savior is grieved and the reputation of His Church is damaged.

* Diligence must be given to keeping the fellowship pure (I Corinthians 5).

* Matthew 18:15-17 is the pattern to be followed should a church member become ensnared by sin:

"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer." --in other words, if a brother or sister in Christ repeatedly ignores the pleas of the family of God to leave the sin and return to the commandments of Scripture, the Church is instructed by Jesus Christ Himself to put the rebellious one out of the fellowship of the Church.

Certainly, however, when there is a clear change of both heart and behavior, the brother or sister may be restored to full fellowship. The Savior spoke such serious words of commandment to His Church because He knew that even the thought of such a procedure would discourage sin and encourage purity among His own.

THE UNITY OF THE FELLOWSHIP

* Few things are any more wonderful for a believer than to be a part of a congregation that is of the same heart and mind, accomplishing together in gladness and joy the will of the Father. Their unity is a key to their spiritual power, and is a treasure worth protecting at all costs.

* Paul instructed Titus, a pastor, to "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:10-11).

The NIV translates:

"Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."

* The seriousness of the sin of sowing discord among the brethren caused Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, to make such a strong statement.

* The desire for restoration is obvious: to "reject" should come only after a first and second warning. Then, if the warnings went unheeded, there was to be a severing of the bonds of fellowship between the church and the individual - permanently if he refused to repent of his sin, or temporarily, it may be assumed, if repentance developed in his heart.

Titus 3:10-11 are the guidelines for our church, should it ever face problems with divisive, factious individuals or groups. If first and second attempts by one of the pastors and a group of church leaders to quiet the factious man or woman fail, the membership secretary will remove the individual's name from the church membership roll permanently or until such time as a genuine change of heart is clearly evidenced by the individual. At that time, the individual may request membership once again, and full fellowship may be restored.