

***What is the Direction of Churches in the Athens Area?***  
***(Rebuilding the foundation of fellowship)***  
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***Introduction:*** Each person in each generation must choose the foundation they will build.

- A. God has clearly shown us the only foundation that will last. **(Eph 2:20)**
  - 1. This foundation consists of delivered words. **(Jn 17:14, 17, 20)**
  - 2. Look at how God equipped the church! **(Eph 4:11-12)**
  - 3. When local churches function as they ought then future generations are prepared! This begins in the home.
- B. Bible and church history shows us that God's people often fail in teaching the next generation. **(1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 4:3-4)**
  - 1. I pray you have been personally blessed to build such a foundation.
  - 2. Consistently the first step away from this foundation is a compromised fellowship. When a group is moving in a direction it can be hard to resist.
  - 3. The desire to put human relationships above God is powerful. **(Gal 1:10)**

***I. Fellowship and Water Baptism***

- A. Why have differences on the subject of water baptism historically demanded a separation of fellowship?
  - 1. Jesus placed baptism as a foundational doctrine for all Christians. **(Eph 4:4-6)**
  - 2. Paul indicated that all Christians were brought into fellowship with Christ and His blood at the point of baptism. **(Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:26-27)**
- B. In the reformation movement the Anabaptist were severely persecuted for their correct belief that only believers should be baptized and that baptism was a burial.
  - 1. Should only believers be baptized? **(Mk 16:15-16; Acts 8:36-38)**
  - 2. The Bible teaches that baptism is an immersion. **(Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12)**
  - 3. These truths if accepted would create great political and social upheaval. Many lost their lives in proclaiming this truth. They had to be quite or be cast out.
  - 4. Was there a "third way" where both views could work together in fellowship? Could both views be equally taught and believed? Only if both views were regarded as unimportant and discardable.
  - 5. A compromised fellowship will lead to convenience becoming the determining factor. Men will ask: "What is the easiest doctrine to practice?" **(1 Kgs 12:28)**

***II. How should we apply God's teaching on Baptism?***

- A. We will seek to have every person find and receive this one baptism.
  - 1. Baptism is the final step to find forgiveness of sins. **(Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16)**
  - 2. We will teach every man these delivered words that one would then naturally seek this baptism! **(Acts 8:35-36)**
  - 3. If there is not clear, repeated, consistent teaching over time then many may give in to compromise. (Ex. Preacher refused to talk about baptism in Jn 3.. "too divisive.")
- B. Consider some questions each of us should ask about our baptism.

1. When were you saved by the blood of Christ?
  2. How old were you?
  3. How long after your salvation were you baptized?
  4. For what purpose were you baptized?
  5. How long after your request to be baptized were you actually baptized?
  6. What did you confess before you were baptized?
  7. How were you baptized? That is was it sprinkling, pouring or immersion in water?
- C. These questions address critical teachings that comprise the one baptism. **(Eph 4:4-5)**
1. Paul did this very thing! **(Acts 19:1-5)**
  2. The promise given on Pentecost could be understood by all! **(Acts 2:38)**
  3. The men Paul met were sincerely baptized but they lacked important teaching and purpose. This lack of teaching and purpose still left them in need of baptism!
  4. Look over the above questions raised and consider how it reveals what was taught.
  5. I am thankful for the one who pressed me on my baptism when I was in college.

### **III. How can the next generation be given this precious promise?**

- A. God's way will provide for each succeeding generation. **(Acts 2:38-39; 1 Tim 6:20-21)**
1. It requires that men will give themselves "entirely" to teaching these entrusted words. This dedication does not come from a lukewarm faith. **(1 Tim 4:15-16; 2 Tim 2:2)**
  2. Laziness and the fear of conflict will destroy a local church. **(Rev 3:15-16)**
  3. Do we not realize that our children and see the difference between conviction and convenience?
- B. A commitment to faithfully teach without compromise will result in a proper fellowship!
1. Those who claim to have such a commitment to grace and love often have a sudden change when the word is boldly preached. **(Mt 15:12-14)**
  2. When the pulpit and the class is restricted from open teaching of God's word then God's fellowship has been discarded.
  3. How can the next generation find faith and a good conscience? **(1 Tim 1:3-5, 18-19; 4:1-2, 6-7, 13; 2 Tim 2:2)**
- C. A failed fellowship will result in assimilation with the world.
1. What will happen if you joined a local denomination and tried to teach the gospel?
  2. You may be tolerated if you only give financial support to those who differ with you, if you allow all who want to receive Christ be taught contrary to what you say you believe, and that only preachers and literature that teaches contrary to what you say you believe be used. Also you must be silent!
  3. Could you accept those conditions and be taken seriously by anyone? A separation of fellowship is demanded! **(Rev 12:11)**
  4. Consider the danger of assimilation. Consider the "Confederados."
  5. The Confederados also have an annual festival, called the Festa Confederada... The festival is marked by Confederate flags, Confederate uniforms....
- Conclusion:** Do you remember these men: Ammiel? Nahbi? Geuel? ... Caleb? Joshua? **(Josh 24:15)**