

Bible Basics Conference 2015: The church

Part 14

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[00:00:01] And we have, I think, about five questions, not so many as yesterday, but then it's been a shorter day today. And after that, our brother Michael Hart will give us a summary, stroke resume of the conference matter.

So, I think the first question, I think our brother Hans Rudi should answer, if you wouldn't mind.

I have got the following question. Can a brother be a bishop, a deacon or an elder, if their children have left the faith?

It's a very serious question. Now, let me first read what the Bible says, just to say what does it really say.

[00:01:05] In chapter 1 Timothy 3 verse 4 it says, one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.

For if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? And then in verse 12, in relation to the deacon, let the deacon be the husband of one wife, ruling their children and their own house well.

If you have noticed, it doesn't say anything where these children are going to end up. It says something about how you take care of your family. And this everybody can see. If you, for instance, are a father who is so occupied with your profession, you run to and fro and you have no time for your family.

[00:02:11] That can be seen. So you are really not caring for your children.

Or if you are a father who doesn't want to take his responsibility, and I've seen that too, he says, you know, to his wife, well you are staying at home. And you know, I provide and I give you the money to run the household, but you have to look after the children. Then it doesn't mean he does not take his

responsibility to bring up the children as God has desired.

He says, fathers, you fathers, you are responsible for bringing up your children. [00:03:01] And it doesn't say anything about the result. You see, we as parents, we can do the best what we can do, and there is still no guarantee that the children will be saved and will follow us. It is only by grace. And I say that standing here, having eight children brought up, and I said, it's not our doing, it's the grace of God if they all follow. It's not me, it's not my wife, it's the grace of God. So we should see that. We have responsibility, and I think the saints will notice whether the father cares, and it says about the children, not about, you know, when the children get older and finally they will be responsible for themselves. We can look after the children, but there is no guarantee that later on they will follow the pathway which we follow. [00:04:08] And therefore I said, it's more the way you're doing, you're handling the responsibility of the household, not the result of it.

The result, we cannot really be responsible for it. It is God's grace.

And I think, therefore, if somebody does not look after his own children, he doesn't care, then you can't be an elder. You can't be a deacon and be responsible now for the assembly. I think this is the point. Mark Grasser, please.

I have a question.

[00:05:07] The second question is, is it necessary to seek the local assembly's consent or approval in our personal or family exercises? I think we've talked about the authority of the local assembly.

I don't think that scripture suggests that the authority of the local assembly extends outside the sorts of things that were covered in my presentation or Hugh's, which followed it. And when it comes to our personal lives or our personal exercises, each of us is individually responsible to the Lord in that regard. And when it comes to family matters, I would suggest it's the husband who is primarily responsible to the Lord for those matters. [00:06:07] So I think that the answer to the question is, as to whether it is necessary to seek the local assembly's consent or approval for personal or family exercises, the answer is probably no. Two further things I would say quickly, though, is one, always good to have or seek the counsel of other believers, particularly when it might come to significant exercises. And certainly should not be afraid to seek the advice of one another and to discuss these things with one another and perhaps even make them matters of prayer. The second thing I would say is that when it comes perhaps to an exercise concerning the Lord's service and particularly a significant exercise in that regard, where one might feel that the Lord is calling them to a particular service, [00:07:12] then I'm not sure that there is necessarily a rule that that should be a matter in respect of which the local assembly might make a judgment. But there is an example of something similar happening in Acts chapter 13, where the Holy Spirit had called out Barnabas and Saul. Then we read a couple of verses, the next verse, verse 3, that the prophets and teachers from the assembly in Antioch laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, giving their approval and support to the exercise that the Holy Spirit had made clear for Barnabas and Saul.

[00:08:12] Perhaps in those circumstances where one feels that the Lord is calling them to a particular service, it would be good if the local assembly could support them in that, assuming that the assembly supports the exercise and can see that it does come from the Lord. I wouldn't say it's necessarily a rule, but perhaps a good example to follow in such circumstances. The remaining three questions really, I suppose, relate to the section on discipline or arise out of comments made in that

session. The first one, ye who are spiritual, Galatians 6 verse 1, does this mean all brethren in fellowship are not spiritual? [00:09:07] What does it mean to be spiritual? Let's read Galatians 6 verse 1 and get the words right. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

I don't think that's implying that some of them might be spiritual and some not. It's assuming that they are spiritual brethren. But, clearly, if one is overtaken in a fault, anyone else who's committing the same fault is hardly in a position to correct them.

And it may be that there is one who ought to be in a position to correct, but he can't because he's not sufficiently spiritually minded. [00:10:10] He's a little bit away from the Lord. That's not implying that that is normal. But that is the meaning, that before we start to correct our brethren, we have to be sure that we are not involved in that same fault. And we have to ensure that we are in a right spiritual state before the Lord to speak to another one about their behaviour. Very serious thing. And what does it mean to be spiritual? I think it means to be in active enjoyment of communion with the Lord. And actively occupied with studying the Word of God, with studying the things of the Lord, with helping my brethren, with all these other things that go with it. Spiritually minded, full of the Word. I hope that's some help. [00:11:04] Assembly decisions are made in brothers' meetings. How then can the whole assembly be, it says implied, I think it means implicated in the decision, bracket sisters also.

Well, they can be. It may be that one or two brothers or the brothers altogether initially have to consider a problem.

But they are not the assembly as we heard yesterday. They are not the assembly. So how then can the assembly make the whole decision? Well the answer is that those brothers consider the matter, come to a conclusion and put it before the whole assembly. That's what happens. That's what happened in Acts 15. Yes? Peter spoke, James spoke, and the whole assembly concurred with that decision.

[00:12:15] Maybe it was the Holy Spirit putting the words into James' mouth. But that decision was accepted by the whole assembly and never questioned. Never openly questioned. Peter later had to be corrected on a point arising out of it. But that's another matter. That decision was accepted. And so it is practically surely in our meetings, isn't it? I mean if supposing a brother or a sister is proposed to be received at the Lord's table. Well the whole meeting don't have to go and visit that person, do they? They appoint perhaps two respected brothers to go and inquire into the matter and come back. And if they stand up before the whole assembly and say, I am happy, we are happy to suggest that our brother, our sister, [00:13:10] who has asked to remember the Lord, we are happy to commend him to the meeting, commend her to the meeting. There should be a silence to give opportunity for anybody to raise an objection.

But if nobody speaks, then in our meetings, and I think it's right, that silence has always been taken for consent. And this happens more often than you might realize. A stranger comes into the meeting, not known to the meeting, but known to one particular brother in the meeting and he will get up and say, you know, Mr. and Mrs. Sandsell with us this morning from X-town. They would like to remember the Lord and I am happy to commend them to the meeting. [00:14:01] Nobody says anything. But if they don't, that's consent. So the whole meeting has assented to that person taking part in the breaking of bread. And I believe that this is a practical question and that's why I have answered it in a practical way and I hope that helps. Now, the third one, moral sins call for discipline.

Does not continuing with sinful tendencies require clear judgment also before partaking at the Lord's table? I see that as two questions.

The assembly cannot judge what is in my heart.

If I have a sinful tendency, nobody knows about it unless I do something. [00:15:02] And as soon as I do something, then that's conduct. So the assembly can judge conduct. It can't judge unrevealed thoughts.

But on the part of the person concerned, well, yes, certainly they should judge themselves before they come to remember the Lord. 1 Corinthians 11, verse 28, first of all, But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. I'll read the whole passage.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. [00:16:01] But when we are judged, we are chastened of the law that we should not be condemned with the world. That's the verse I would like to emphasize, the previous verse. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. It is right that we should judge ourselves before we come to remember the Lord Jesus. And in the light of what we find, we may even have to stay away. We may. But the desire of the Holy Spirit is that having examined ourselves, it doesn't say stay away, it says let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. And I think many have been glad in their hearts that it does say that. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. [00:17:03] That verse, for the avoidance of doubt, that verse is addressed to believers. It doesn't mean that anybody can walk in the door and decide in their own hearts whether they are going to have fellowship. It is for the assembly to receive. But it is for the individual, it is for me, to examine myself before I go to remember the Lord Jesus or have part in his supper. And that's the last question. I'll hand over to Michael now for the summary.