

Beliefs Important to Baptists

T E A C H I N G G U I D E

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Beliefs Important to Baptists—Teaching Guide

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Beliefs Important to Baptists

Beliefs Important to Baptists is Bible study that is especially related to who the people called Baptists are, what they believe, and how they live. Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide for Beliefs Important to Baptists* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

Note the format of the teaching suggestions. You'll find first a "Teaching Plan." The suggestions in this plan are intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach. The major headings in the "Teaching Plan" are intended to help you organize and sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, "Connect with Life," provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, "Guide the Study," offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible's message. The third major heading, "Encourage Application," is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

In addition to a "Teaching Plan," you'll also find "Additional Teaching Ideas." These ideas may be used as substitutes for or supplements to one or more of the teaching ideas in "Teaching Plan."

Here are ten steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Prepare your class for this study by providing copies of *Beliefs Important to Baptists—Study Guide* at least a week in advance.
2. Decide on the order in which your class will study these lessons after the introductory lesson.
3. Consider carefully the suggested main idea and study aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.
4. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (The writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lesson. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen, of course.)
5. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in *Beliefs Important to Baptists*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself.
7. Review "Teaching Plan" and "Additional Teaching Ideas" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class and how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

Who in the World Are Baptists, Anyway?

TEACHING AIM

To lead the class to summarize some basic biblical understandings that are the source of who Baptists are, what they believe, and how they live

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Begin your session by asking class members to identify the following from your simple descriptions (you may want to pause between clues to see how each answer changes as more clues are given):
 - a. Animal, crawls, likes rain, has a shell (a turtle).
 - b. Has an engine, four wheels, needs periodic maintenance, most sixteen year-olds want one (an automobile; definitely not a lawnmower!).
 - c. Grows tall, some are very old, can be found in a forest, there are many varieties of these, has leaves (tree).
 - d. Building, several rooms, some people never go there, others go often, steeple (church building).
 - e. Round, red, juicy, falls from trees, keeps the doctor away (apple).
2. Note that while it is easy to describe many things, it is somewhat difficult to describe a Baptist! Ask class members for one- or two-word

suggestions that describe Baptists (answers may include words such as independent, Bible-believing, mission-minded, diverse, autonomous, open, caring, potluck, and many others).

3. Comment that in this lesson we will discuss some of the things that make a Baptist a Baptist. You may want to list and call attention to several key words such as “Soul Competency,” “Salvation by Grace Through Faith,” and “Priesthood of the Believer” on the chalkboard.

Guide the Study

4. Enlist a class member to share a five-minute testimony of his or her salvation experience. Be sure to provide a copy of the elements below before he or she prepares to speak. Ask other class members to consider these elements as they listen (you may also want to prepare and display a poster listing the elements):
 - We are not sufficient in ourselves.
 - The ability to decide is a gift from God.
 - Our choice about God cannot be delegated to someone else.
 - No one should try to coerce another into a decision for Christ.
5. Present the following definition of soul competency (from the lesson comments) to the class: “. . . Each person possesses the capacity to decide whether to follow Jesus or not.” Read Ephesians 2:1–7 to the group. Ask class members to respond to this question: What do these verses seem to say about soul competency?
6. Ask a class member to read aloud (or quote from memory) Ephesians 2:8–10. Point out that the words “grace” and “faith” are mentioned. Ask what other things this passage teaches are necessary for salvation (none).
7. Give a brief summary of other beliefs that arise from the discussion of salvation by grace and through faith. (Beliefs that are discussed in the lesson comments include believer’s baptism, the Lord’s Supper, church membership, church governance, church autonomy, and voluntary cooperation.)

8. Read Ephesians 2:11–19 aloud. Share with class members that one of the roles of the priest in the Old Testament was to be a mediator between God and people. Read 1 Peter 2:9–10 aloud. Comment that Peter states that those who are in Christ are a “royal priesthood.” Ask: What does this passage indicate about the need for a priest to mediate between ourselves and God? (Not needed.) Enlist a class member to read Ephesians 2:19 to the group. For additional emphasis you may want to ask another person or two to read the same verse aloud.
9. Ask: How does the concept of “soul competency” relate to the additional doctrines we have examined today?

Encourage Application

10. Challenge members to reread the Scripture passages from today’s lesson during the week. Remind them that although our relationship with Christ is primary, we should not take our Baptist roots and heritage lightly.
11. Ask class members to share something they learned for the first time about Baptists (or something they were reminded of again). Encourage them to share the significance or impact of what they learned. Allow time for as many to respond as would like. Close the session in prayer, thanking God for our rich heritage and close connection to God’s Word for our source of belief.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Recipe Idea.* Enlist a class member to read a list of ingredients while class members try to guess the recipe. You may want to do this several times. You may even want to read two or three different ingredient lists for the same item (for example, there are several ways to make homemade ice cream). Call attention to a poster you have made before class that says, “Much like a recipe, a combination of doctrines and beliefs actually go into describing a Baptist.” Comment that while people

may hold different ideas about what should go into the Baptist mix, most Baptists agree on the core ingredients.

Guide the Study: *Chart.* To overview the study, make a chart on the chalkboard or use a handout to list and explore some of the basic Baptist beliefs. Have class members fill in the appropriate boxes under the column “Brief Explanation” as each topic and Bible passage is read and discussed. Be sure to guide discussion in light of what Scripture says. Comment that the single most important guiding force behind the development of Baptist beliefs is our understanding of Scripture. (The explanations printed in this column are for your guidance and are taken from the lesson comments. Allow members to make suggestions before sharing them.)

Who in the World Are Baptists, Anyway?

Basic Belief	Scripture Passages	Brief Explanation
Soul Competency	Ephesians 2:1–7 Genesis 1:26–27 Matthew 16:13–17	The ability to decide is a gift from God. Each person must decide for herself or himself to follow Jesus or not. We should not try to coerce another in a decision for Christ.
Salvation	John 3:16 Ephesians 2:8–10 John 14:6	God loved the world so much that he gave us his Son to provide for our salvation. Salvation is in Christ by grace through faith alone.
Priesthood of the Believers	Ephesians 2:11–19	In the Old Testament the people had access to God through priests. Now, every believer has equal and direct access to God.

Encourage Application: *Sharing.* Invite class members to share how being a Baptist is meaningful to them. Ask members to consider how they will respond this week if someone asks them the question, Who are you people called Baptists, anyway?

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

The Authority of the Bible

TEACHING AIM

To lead participants to describe how the Scriptures are authoritative for their lives

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. To introduce the unit, display a poster with the study heading and the four lesson titles:

BELIEFS IMPORTANT TO BAPTISTS

- The Authority of the Bible
- Believer's Baptism and Church Membership
- Congregational Church Government
- Evangelism and Missions: The Great Commission

Point out that while each Baptist church is autonomous and independent, there are some basic beliefs that most Baptists hold.

Each of these beliefs is important to who we are, how we live, and why we do what we do. Ask class members to name some basic Baptist beliefs in addition to those listed on the poster. Enlist someone to write responses on a marker board. Comment that many of the things listed on the board will be discussed during the next few weeks. Note also that other study units in *Beliefs Important to Baptists* provide Bible studies on other beliefs.

2. Refer to (or show, if possible) the badge of a law enforcement officer. Comment that most adults respect the badge as a symbol of authority. Ask class members to respond to the following questions:
 - Is it important for people to recognize authority? Why or why not?
 - Does the recognition of authority affect the way we live and the things we do?
 - What are some things (or who are some people) that have authority over our lives?
3. Ask class members to finish the sentence: *The Bible is important to me because . . .* Responses may include answers such as these: it contains the Ten Commandments; it tells us how to live; it contains the story of Jesus; it is God's instruction book; parents can use it to guide their children; reading it can change our lives.

Guide the Study

4. Comment that in today's lesson, class members will explore ways that the Bible can become the central authority for our lives. Prepare slips of paper with selected verses from Psalm 119:11,97–112 written on them. Prepare enough slips so that each member has a verse. Ask class members to read their verse to the group (be sensitive to those who might not like to read aloud). Be sure to include the following verses:

Verse 11—"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Verse 97—“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”

Verse 105—“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Verse 109—“Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law.”

Verse 112—“My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.”

Point out to the class that the Scriptures played an important role in the life of the psalmist and that they can also play an important role in our lives.

5. Present a brief lecture on the focal passages, using information from the lesson comments. Make the following points related to the overall theme of how Scripture can become authoritative for life:
 - a. Scripture will become authoritative in your life as the Bible’s message leads you to a personal relationship with Jesus (Luke 24:13–45).
 - b. Scripture will become authoritative in your life as you comprehend and accept the true nature of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:14–17).
 - c. Scripture will become authoritative in your life as its teachings flow from accurate interpretation (2 Peter 1:19–21).
 - d. Scripture will become authoritative in your life as it provides solid and practical guidance for Christian living (Psalm 119:97–112; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:14–17).

Encourage Application

6. Ask a class member to read the following statement from the last paragraph of the introduction in the lesson comments (just before the first subhead): “It is one thing for Christians as a whole or as a group (such as Baptists) to affirm the Bible as authoritative. It is another for you as an individual, however, to make the Bible God’s ultimate authority for your belief and behavior.”

7. Read Luke 24:32 aloud. Ask class members to think of a time when they were deeply affected by the Word of God. Ask one or two class members to share their experiences. Be ready to share an experience of your own. Remind class members that the effect of Scripture in our lives goes beyond emotional response or intellectual understanding. When the Bible becomes the central authority in our lives, changed behavior is the result!
8. Challenge members to keep track of some of the ways that the authority of the Bible influences their behavior throughout the coming week. Allow time at the beginning of next week's lesson for members to share their discoveries.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *No Bibles.* Collect class members' Bibles as they enter the room. Ask the class to imagine they had to live the rest of their lives without a written copy of Scripture. Remind members that there are people in our world who do not have a copy of the book we often take for granted. (It would be even more meaningful if you could enlist a former prisoner of war or someone who did not have access to a Bible for a period of time to share a word of testimony.)

Ask class members to respond to the following questions:

- What would you miss most if you did not have a copy of the Bible?
- How would this scenario change the way you live?

Lead the class to sing (or read the words aloud) to the chorus, "Thy Word Is a Lamp unto My Feet, and a Light unto My Path." (Or choose another chorus or hymn related to the Bible.)

Guide the Study: *Dramatic Reading.* Enlist three class members to present a dramatic reading of Luke 24:13–32. One person is to read the narrative, another to read the words of Jesus, and the other to read the words of the two believers. Another possibility is for two class members

to tell the story in their own words, as if they were the two believers on the road to Emmaus. Explore the following questions afterward:

- What did Jesus do in verse 27?
- How did the believers respond to Jesus' explanation (24:28–29)?
- How did the hearing of Scripture affect the two believers (24:32)?

Encourage Application: *Photo.* Take a picture of a friend or family member from your wallet or purse. Briefly describe the special relationship you have with the person and how the picture is a reminder of your relationship. You may want to use the example of the traveling businessman who carried an 8 x 10 picture of his wife everywhere he went. It was the first thing he unpacked and set on the hotel desk during every trip. When asked why, he responded, “That picture of my wife reminds me of how special and important she is to me. When I am tempted, the picture reminds me of my relationship to her.” Comment that in some ways the Bible is like a picture, for it shows us Jesus Christ. When we truly see him, our lives are radically transformed!

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

The Autonomy of the Local Congregation of Believers

TEACHING AIM

To help participants explain why Baptists believe that each local church is autonomous and identify implications of this idea

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Remind members that the previous lesson was about baptism and the Lord's Supper. Throughout Baptist history, Baptists have had disagreements as to the particulars of these ordinances, such as: After a person is saved, should there be other requirements met (classes, a public testimony, etc.) before he or she is baptized? As to the Lord's Supper, should any Christian be able to participate, or only members of the local congregation? Ask members to decide the correct answer to *who* decides these issues: (a) the Southern Baptist Convention; (b) the state convention; (c) the local association of churches; or (d) the local congregation. If members answer *d*, they already know something about the autonomy of the local church!
2. Share this story: When Dr. Bill Pinson was Executive Director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, a government official

asked him to “go and straighten out” a Baptist church that was not following the law. Dr. Pinson replied: “There is no Baptist or Baptist group who has authority over a church, who [can] ‘straighten them out.’” When the official then demanded to speak “to the person . . . in charge of Baptists,” Dr. Pinson suggested that only by prayer could he do that “because Jesus Christ was the only One ‘in charge’ of a Baptist church.”¹

Guide the Study

3. Note that whenever a group—however small or large—gathers in the name of Christ, Christ has made a promise to them. Read this promise together in Matthew 18:20.
4. Point out that Jesus made this beautiful promise in Matthew 18:20 as he instructed his disciples on the thorny issue of disciplining a fellow believer. Invite someone to read aloud Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:15–20, and encourage the class to listen for what this passage suggests about decision-making in the church. Ask members to comment on who had authority in this example.
 - An individual? To what extent?
 - Several people? To what extent?
 - The believer’s church? To what extent?
 - God? To what extent?
5. Suggest that although some particulars in the application of biblical discipline may be open to interpretation, two ideas seem clear:
 - God has ultimate authority over the church.
 - No outside person or group of people disciplines the member. Rather, the local congregation does so.
6. Ask someone to read aloud 1 Corinthians 5:1–5, about another example of the church’s need to discipline members who were immoral. Note that here Paul’s advice was very direct, and yet he acknowledged the spirit of Christ within the local assembly. Ultimately the action

must be theirs. (If in reading this passage, your class members disagree as to *how much* authority Paul had in removing the immoral man, you may wish to point out that independence in interpretation is part of what makes us Baptists!)

7. Ask, What significance do you see in the fact that Paul wrote most of his letters to churches, not just to church leaders? Do you see a connection between the belief we studied earlier—the priesthood of the believer—and the autonomy of the local congregation?
8. Write these words on the board or on a poster you prepare ahead of time:
 - The dilemma—What was the need? (Acts 6:1–2)
 - The decision—Who decided on the seven? (6:3–5)
 - The delegation—Who decided on the men best suited for this ministry? (6:5–6)

Divide the class into three groups, each answering a question. (If you prefer not to form groups, you could do this activity with the whole class.)

9. Ask, Have you ever noticed how God’s Word is so practical? Ask members to read the following statements to see whether they apply to your local church. (You will need to print them out beforehand.)
 - a. “The local church is accessible, meeting where members live.”
 - b. “It meets frequently, providing opportunity for participation and spiritual nurture.”
 - c. “It offers possibility for a diversity which is not afforded by small groups.”
 - d. “It is more personal and flexible than general bodies such as state and national gatherings.”²²
 - e. “Included in the process [of determining God’s guidance] are careful Bible study, deliberation, and prayer . . . followed by a vote of the congregation to determine the will of the majority. . . . It is still the best way for a congregation to seek God’s leadership in matters not specifically dealt with in scripture.”²³

10. For another biblical example of the local church at work, ask members to read Acts 13:1–3. Ask, How serious was this church about following the Lord? What actions in these verses tell us that?
11. With the class, look especially at verse 2. Ask, Who told the church at Antioch to send Barnabas and Saul as missionaries?
12. Note that our Baptist ancestors feared that a “denominational organization . . . would try to exercise authority over churches, telling them what to believe and how to function.” However, in time, “they realized that through voluntary cooperation—a ‘fellowship in the gospel’ (Philippians 1:5)—no autonomy would be lost but much could be gained in effectiveness for evangelism, missions, and ministry.”⁴ Ask, Is the idea of moving beyond the Antioch model in order to evangelize and minister cooperatively a good idea today?

Encourage Application

13. Ask, Whose responsibility is it to call a pastor? determine the church’s budget? make decisions as to who can serve as clergy, deacons, and teachers? be involved in missions? Give each person a card that reads “The buck stops here.” Note that under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we should not slip into the attitude of “They ought to do thus and so.” *We are* the “they”!

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life or Make Application: *Poster and Quiz.* Write on a poster, handout, or overhead beforehand:

- *Episcopal System*—Authority is exercised by a hierarchy beginning with bishops, then priests or pastors, then local church members.
- *Presbyterian System*—Authority is held by a body of elders, which includes both clergy and laypersons, in each local church. Authority

outside the local church is drawn from these bodies of elders.

- *Congregational System*—Authority rests in members of the local congregation. The local church may relate to larger denominational bodies, but no denominational body has authority over the local church.

Give this brief quiz orally. The correct answers are in brackets.

- a. Which system finds some precedent in the New Testament? (All three!)
- b. Which modern denominations are “episcopal” in government? (Included are Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Episcopal, Methodist, with different variations.)
- c. Which denominations are “presbyterian”? (Included are Presbyterian, Reformed.)
- d. Which denominations are “congregational”? (Included are Congregationalists, Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ, Baptists.)
- e. Which govern from the top down? (The first two.)
- f. Which govern from the bottom up? (The third one.)
- g. Why have Baptists chosen to be congregational? (Because we believe in the Holy Spirit’s calling and gifting each Christian—the priesthood of the believer—and consider congregational church government to be the extension of that belief.)

Notes

1. William M. Pinson, Jr., Sermon, “The Baptist Way,” 1996. (Provided by the Baptist Distinctives Committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, Texas.)
2. W. Boyd Hunt, *Redeemed! Eschatological Redemption and the Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 219–220.
3. Hunt, *Redeemed*, 223.
4. Pinson, “The Baptist Way.”

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership

TEACHING AIM

To help the class state the meaning of believer's baptism and why it is important

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Set a clear glass with water on a table in your classroom. Ask:
 - What is the significance of water? (Responses may include the following: it gives refreshment when we are thirsty; it cleanses us; our bodies are made up mostly of water; water is necessary for life; and so forth.)
 - What is the significance of water in the Bible? (Responses may include the following: God parted the water for the children of Israel; Jesus turned the water into wine; Jesus ministered to others by the seashore and by the well; and so forth.) Point out that one very significant use of water was for baptism. Jesus was baptized in water, as were many other people.
2. Put your fingers in the glass and let them touch the water. As you take your fingers out of the glass, comment that denominations and

religious groups utilize varying methods of baptism and see varying meanings in it. Some sprinkle, while others immerse. In some groups, baptism is a symbol of salvation; in others it is thought to be necessary for salvation. Note that today's study will focus on the biblical meaning, mode, and mandate for baptism.

Guide the Study

3. Divide the class into three small groups (if class size does not allow for three groups, this activity can be done by the entire class). Assign each group one of the following passages. Ask each group to chart the sequence of events as they led up to baptism.

Acts 8:26–38	The baptism of the official from Ethiopia
Acts 16:11–15	The baptism of Lydia
Acts 16:25–34	The baptism of the Philippian jailer
4. Ask each group to share a brief report with the class. Have a class member jot down the sequence of events on a marker board. Point out similarities and differences between the Scriptural accounts, but comment that in each case, salvation preceded baptism and baptism was a symbol or picture of salvation.
5. Ask, Is immersion in water really important or will some other mode equally express the meaning of baptism? Use the section titled “The Mode of Baptism” in the study guide to lead a discussion about the importance of immersion.
6. Write the words *obedience*, *ordinance*, and *membership* on the marker board. Explain that these words help us understand why baptism is important. Share a dictionary meaning of each word, and then tell how the word is used in the context of our study. You may want to suggest some of the following ideas:
 - *Obedience*—The Great Commission calls Christ's followers to make disciples and baptize them. Baptism expresses obedience on the part of the believer and the church. Obedience is our response to God's love and work in our lives. Jesus' obedience to

the Father (Philippians 2:8) is the supreme example for Christians.

- *Ordinance*—An ordinance is a practice that is commanded by the instruction of the Lord. When we baptize, we are following the command of Christ.
- *Membership*—After a believer is baptized, he or she becomes a church member. Baptism is the door to church membership. Baptism symbolizes a person's testimony of salvation and desire to be a part of the body of Christ.

Encourage Application

7. Encourage each member to reflect prayerfully on his or her own spiritual pilgrimage. Ask class members to recount silently their baptismal experience. Ask them to focus on the meaning, mode, and mandate for baptism.
8. Comment that sometimes after a detailed study of baptism such as this, someone may have questions regarding his or her baptism. Note that some adults already know Christ, but they have never followed him in baptism. Other adults were baptized before they came to know Christ personally. Still others may have been sprinkled or experienced some other mode of baptism besides immersion.
9. Remind class members that this lesson is designed to help us better understand the meaning and importance of baptism. Adults should not be embarrassed if they discover the need for baptism in their lives. It is cause for celebration! Make yourself available to class members who have additional questions or need to discuss baptism further.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Field Trip.* Invite class members to follow you as you lead them on a “field trip.” Take them to the sanctuary or other

location of the baptismal pool. You may want to arrange for it to contain water. Comment that today's lesson explores the meaning of believer's baptism and why it is important. Note: This activity is often done by children's classes, but there are some adults who have never seen their church's baptistery.

Guide the Study: *Interview.* Conduct a live interview with your pastor, a staff member, or a retired pastor to present a brief overview of baptism. Use the following questions during the interview (provide questions to your guest ahead of time):

- How does a person know when he or she should be baptized?
- Is baptism just for children?
- Why should a person be baptized?
- How are salvation and baptism related?
- What should people do if they realize that they were baptized prior to salvation?

Encourage Application: *Case Study.* Present the following case study: John faithfully attended worship services on Sunday mornings, and he occasionally attended Bible study. Two weeks ago the worship service focused on the meaning of baptism. John attended the service, but he has not attended since. A class member saw John at the grocery store and told him he was missed at church. John responded by saying that he really enjoyed attending, but he was unsure about baptism. He thought he was part of the church, but after the sermon two weeks ago he realized that he was just an attender. John is not opposed to the concept of baptism, but he just didn't know what he should do or whether he was ready to take the next step.

Ask class members to brainstorm ways that they could help John.

Encourage class members to recall the people who have been baptized in your church during the previous month or two. Ask them also to take note of the people who are baptized in your church during the next month or two. Ask class members to pray for these people by name. Encourage class members to look and listen for opportunities to talk with others about salvation and baptism.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

Congregational Church Government

TEACHING AIM

To lead the class to explain how New Testament churches were organized and made decisions and what this teaches about church government today

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Ask various class members to complete the following sentences (feel free to add or change sentences to fit your class and community):
 - “If I owned the convenience store, I would _____.”
 - “If I were in charge of the large factory, I would _____.”
 - “If I were in charge of the local school, I would _____.”
 - “If I was in charge of my family reunion, I would _____.”

Note: The purpose of this activity is to help adults identify with various structures requiring effective leadership. Step two will move them from secular structures to the context of the church. Encourage adults to dream about possibilities, and be careful not to criticize community leaders or others in any of the above positions.

2. Point out to the class that many people have ideas about how businesses, schools, and other such things ought to be conducted and

what they would do if they were in charge. Some of the basic questions adults face in church are, “Who is in charge?” and “How should we get things done?”

3. Comment that today’s lesson will allow class members to explain how New Testament churches were organized and made decisions and what this teaches about church government today. Suggest to class members that during the course of the discussion, they look for answers to three questions:
 - What is the nature of congregational church government?
 - What are some foundational Baptist beliefs about church government?
 - What are some threats to congregational church government?

Guide the Study

4. To explore the nature of congregational church government, ask four previously enlisted class members to share two-minute reports using the lesson comments on the four teachings under the heading, “The Nature of Congregational Church Government,” including Scriptures listed there. Allow time for discussion.
5. Ask, How is it possible for a group of people to be a “spiritual democracy”? Discuss the church’s unique nature of being both democratic (rule of the people) and theocratic (ruled by God). Assign each of these passages to be read aloud: Acts 6:1–6, 1 Corinthians 5:1–5; 2 Corinthians 8:1–13. Ask the class to identify a similarity in these passages (while apostles could suggest solutions to problems, important matters were referred to the entire congregation for settlement).
6. Prepare and present a brief lecture on “The Foundations of Baptist Belief in Congregational Church Government,” using the material under this topic in the lesson comments. Be sure to highlight the following foundations:

- The Priesthood of Every Believer
 - The Lordship of Jesus Christ
 - The Autonomy of the Local Church
 - The Church As the Body of Christ
7. Comment that there are some threats to the concept of congregational church government. Ask class members to identify and discuss potential threats to the freedoms we enjoy. Be sure to note that churches must find a proper balance to the opposing threats of passivity and authoritarianism.

Encourage Application

8. Ask class members to share answers they found to the three questions listed in step 3. Lead the class to discuss the questions at the end of the lesson comments.
9. Hand out a list of church organizational leaders and staff members. Comment that while each of these people have specific job responsibilities within the church, every member is important to the well-being and governance of the church. Spend a few moments in prayer for specific leaders listed, as well as for the participation and contribution of every class member to the work and ministry of the church.
10. Ask each member to contemplate silently the question, How can I personally be more involved and helpful in the governing of my church?

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Question and Reading.* Ask, Who tells Baptist churches what to do and how to do it? After class members have had time to respond, enlist a class member to read aloud this paragraph from

the lesson comments under the section, “The Nature of Congregational Church Government”:

In congregational church government, church authority centers in local, sovereign, independent congregations. Local churches committed to the congregational church government pattern have both the right and the responsibility to care for their own affairs under the guidance of Jesus Christ. No bishop, no convention, no pastor, no influential group (either local or national), no civil authority, and no association should dictate either the doctrines or the practices of a local church. No organization or group in Baptist life is superior to or legislates for the local congregations. Baptist churches place authority in the membership of the local fellowship under the guidance of Christ and allow no outside force to dictate either belief or practice.

Tell class members that today’s study will focus on biblical foundations for church government.

Guide the Study: *Outline.* Present the following outline to guide class discussion. Enlist various class members to read the focal passages before the verses are discussed.

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. What to do when you do not get along | Matthew 18:15–18 |
| 2. Power and prayer | Matthew 18:19–20 |
| 3. Organizing for ministry | Acts 6:1–6 |
| 4. Calling church leaders | Acts 13:1–3; 15:22 |
| 5. What to do when a believer hurts the church | 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 |
| 6. Concerning collections | 1 Corinthians 16:1–3 |

Encourage Application: *Brainstorming.* Ask class members to brainstorm ways the passages listed in the preceding outline help us understand the biblical model for congregational church government. You may want to have someone write responses on a marker board. Close with a prayer of petition, asking God to guide each member of your church as you serve together.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

The Deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ

TEACHING AIM

To help the class state what the New Testament teaches about Jesus' deity and lordship

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Before class, attach four small posters to the focal wall to help members understand the four beliefs to be studied in Unit III of *Beliefs Important to Baptists*. These are the four topics:
 - (1) The Deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ
 - (2) The Security of the Believer
 - (3) Voluntary Cooperation Among Churches
 - (4) Religious Freedom and Separation of Church and State.
2. Also before class, write the following outline on a marker board or poster so you can refer to it to point the direction of the Bible study.

The Deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ

1. Who Is Jesus? (Matthew 16:13–16)
2. Who Is Christ? (John 1:1–5, 14)

3. Christ Reveals His Deity (John 10:30–38)
4. Thomas Declares the Deity of Christ (John 20:28)
5. Christ Is Equal with God (Philippians 2:5–11)
6. Christ Is the Fullness of God (Colossians 2:9)
7. Christ Is Glorified in Heaven (Revelation 5:1–14)

3. Refer to the introductory story about Arius and the Council of Nicea in the lesson commentary. Ask participants to share some ideas people today are suggesting about the identity of Jesus Christ. After three or four ideas have been shared, make the transition into the Bible study by stating that the purpose of this study is to help everyone know what the New Testament teaches about Jesus' deity and lordship.

Guide the Study

4. Divide the class into five study teams. Each team will consist of two or more people who will study the Bible passage and lesson commentary, discuss the assigned topic, and prepare a two-minute report. (If the class is limited in number, individual assignments could be made to knowledgeable people, or you as teacher could prepare one or more assignments.) Prepare the following assignment sheets.
 - *Assignment 1.* Study Matthew 16:13–16 and the lesson commentary section titled “Who Is Jesus?” Discuss the significance of Peter’s confession, and prepare to present your ideas in a two-minute report.
 - *Assignment 2.* Study John 1:1–5, 14, and the lesson commentary section titled “Who Is Christ?” Study also the sidebar, “The Use of ‘Word.’” Discuss the significance of the deity of Christ and the humanity of Christ, and prepare to present your ideas in a two-minute report.
 - *Assignment 3.* Study John 10:30–38 and the lesson commentary

section titled “Christ Reveals His Deity.” Discuss the significance of Jesus’ testimony about himself and the four witnesses cited in John 5:31–47. Prepare to present your ideas in a two-minute report.

- *Assignment 4.* Study John 20:28; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 2:9 and the lesson commentary sections titled “Thomas Declares the Deity of Christ,” “Christ Is Equal With God,” and “Christ Is the Fullness of God.” Discuss the significance of these confessions about Jesus, and prepare to present your ideas in a two-minute report.
 - *Assignment 5.* Study Revelation 5:1–14 and the lesson commentary section titled “Christ Is Glorified in Heaven.” Discuss the significance of praising and worshipping Christ as Lord on earth as well as in heaven, and prepare to present your ideas in a two-minute report.
5. Ask a capable person on each team to serve as leader. Announce that the teams will have ten minutes to complete the assignments. After ten minutes, call on each team to make a report. Fill in significant ideas after each report, but judge the time so all teams can share their thoughts.

Encourage Application

6. Lead a discussion of the study questions in the lesson commentary, especially those questions not previously discussed during the study team reports. Use question 3 to allow members to share a testimony of the experiences and circumstances that led them to confess Christ as Lord and God. If a person in the class has not confessed faith in Christ as Savior, use this time as an opportunity to present the gospel and encourage a commitment.
7. Ask participants to think of possible times when they would need to affirm their belief about the deity and lordship of Christ. Include

people to whom they would need to share their belief. Use the marker board to record their responses.

8. Distribute a sheet of paper to participants. Ask them to write a brief letter to a person who does not know Jesus Christ as Lord, explaining to him or her the truth about Jesus' deity and lordship. The recipient of the letter could be real or imagined. After about five minutes, ask volunteers to share what they have written. Conclude the session with a prayer that members will have opportunities this week to share what they have learned.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Case Studies.* Read one or both of the following life situations to the class and lead a discussion on how participants could respond.

- *Case study 1.* Maria is a co-worker. At coffee break, she said, "I think Jesus was a good man and a good teacher, but he certainly was not God. How could a human being ever measure up to being God?"
- *Case study 2.* Josh, a Christian college student, is struggling with temptations. He says, "I know the Bible teaches that Jesus was tempted in every way just like I am, but I just don't believe it. Because Jesus was God, Jesus was able to resist temptations a lot easier than I can. I know the Bible says Jesus came in the flesh, but he was a different kind of human being than I am."

Guide the Study: *Study Guide.* Prepare a study guide to be distributed to each member, using the questions that follow. Use the questions to generate discussion. Encourage participants to write ideas and answers to the questions.

Study Guide

1. What was the significance of Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16?

2. What is the meaning of “Word” as used in John 1:1?
3. How does John 1:14 affirm the humanity of Jesus?
4. Based on John 10:30–38, how do the miracles of Jesus prove his deity?
5. What is the difference between Thomas’ confession in John 20:28 and Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:16?
6. How does the description of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–11 reveal that Jesus is both God and human?
7. Why did the statement in Colossians 2:9 have special significance to the Colossian Christians?
8. What does Revelation 5:13 reveal about worship and praise?

Encourage Application: *Paraphrase.* Ask participants to work in pairs to rewrite the statement from the Council of Nicea as given in the lesson commentary. How would they change the statement based on the Bible study and contemporary English? After a few minutes ask volunteers to share their work and defend the changes if someone differs with them.

Evangelism and Missions: The Great Commission

TEACHING AIM

To lead participants to tell why evangelism and missions are essential tasks of churches and individual Christians

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Refer to these questions mentioned in the introduction in the lesson comments: What do churches do? What are they good for? You may wish to rephrase them as follows: What is the church supposed to do? Why does our church exist? Allow time for members to respond.
2. Tell the following story: A church in a small community decided to conduct a community survey and place a paperback copy of the New Testament in every home in the town. While most church members were enthusiastic about the endeavor, a few thought it was worthless. They believed everybody in town already belonged to a church and had no real spiritual needs. Several people came to know Christ as Savior as a result of the survey and Scripture distribution. A young man began attending church again, and he soon experienced

a call into full-time ministry. A woman who lived within two blocks of the church commented that she had lived there for more than twenty years and this was the first time anyone or any church had reached out to her.

3. Note that while the special emphasis in the life of a church brought some exceptional results, the church was merely doing what churches are called to do on a regular basis—reach people and make disciples. Ask class members to discuss ways your church is presently carrying out this task.

Guide the Study

4. Enlist a class member or guest to present a monologue as Abraham, based on Genesis 12:1–9. (If doing the monologue is not possible, enlist someone to read Genesis 12:1–3 aloud.) Form two listening teams and ask them to listen for the answers to the following questions during the monologue:

Team One:

What were some of the things God asked Abraham to leave behind?

What is the significance of these things?

Team Two:

What were some of the things God promised to Abraham?

What is the significance of these things?

Allow teams to discuss the monologue for a few minutes and then present their findings to the whole class.

5. Read Exodus 19:5–6 aloud. Ask:
 - What do these verses tell us about our responsibility for evangelism?
 - What does this passage and the passage from Genesis 12 tell us about how God feels about human beings and what God wants for them?

6. Ask class members to turn to Romans 10:13–15. Ask participants to notice some of the steps in the process that leads to salvation. (You may want to write these in a stair-step arrangement on a board or on a poster.)
 - a. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord is saved.
 - b. They did not call on him earlier because they did not believe.
 - c. They did not believe because they had not heard.
 - d. How could they hear without a preacher?
 - e. How can someone preach unless he is sent?
 - f. Those who bring good news are praised.Ask, What does this passage suggest about our need for salvation?
7. Before class, make a poster with these words on it:

THE GREAT COMMISSION

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

—MATTHEW 28:18–20

Call attention to the Great Commission poster. Ask participants to read the words in unison. Comment that these words should express the purpose, mission, or goal of every congregation. Use the information in the lesson comments under the heading, “Missions/Evangelism Responds Obediently to Christ’s Commission (Matthew 28:18–20; John 20:21),” to explain the five “great” things about the Great Commission.

8. Refer to Jesus' words in John 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Ask class members to respond to the following questions:
 - What do you think this meant to the disciples?
 - What do you think it means to us?
 - How does this verse parallel God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12?
9. Invite a class member to read Acts 1:8 aloud to the class. Note the similarities (and differences) in the two passages, and point out that both passages help us understand our task. Note especially the emphasis in Acts 1:8 on the Holy Spirit's power. Note also the emphasis in Matthew 28:20 on Jesus' presence with us as we do evangelism and missions.
10. Refer to the four reasons the lesson comments gives for why evangelism/missions is an essential task of Christians and churches:

This task is essential because missions/evangelism (1) begins with the loving desire of God for all humankind; (2) meets the ultimate need of people; (3) responds obediently to Christ's commission to his followers; and (4) operates in the promised, supernatural power of God.

Ask, Which of these reasons do you think we most neglect and most need to emphasize? as individuals? as a class? as a church?

Invite the class to repeat this statement with you: "Evangelism is an essential task of Christ's church."

Encourage Application

11. Suggest that one of the dangers of Bible study is that people often hear and comprehend, but they do not act on what they learn. Comment that our understanding of the purpose of the church calls for response in evangelism/missions.
12. Ask class members to identify particular needs or specific areas in their community that may provide your class, your church, or

themselves as individuals with opportunities for missions/evangelism. These needs could include reaching out to an unreached people group, providing a Bible study class or after-school childcare in an apartment complex, working in the church's food and clothing pantry, conducting a neighborhood survey, participating in the church's outreach ministry, and many other possibilities.

13. Lead class members in prayer, asking God to reveal to your church the depth of the need for evangelism and missions. Ask members to make a commitment to follow God as Abraham did and as the Lord commanded. Challenge them to participate in an evangelism/missions activity in the next week.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Testimony.* Call on a previously enlisted class member to share a testimony regarding the role of the church in his or her salvation story. Encourage class members to listen for details that may give clues as to the purpose and mission of the church.

Guide the Study: *Scripture Matching Activity.* Draw four quadrants on the marker board, as indicated in the following diagram. In quadrant one, place the words "Missions/Evangelism Begins with the Loving Desire of God." In the second, write "Evangelism/Missions Meets the Ultimate Human Need." In the third quadrant, write "Missions/Evangelism Responds Obediently to Christ's Commission." In the fourth quadrant write "Evangelism/Missions Operates in God's Promise of Divine Power."

Hand out slips of paper with one of the following verses on them. Ask class members to read their verse(s) and decide which quadrant best illustrates the message of the verse (some verses may fit in two or more quadrants equally well).

<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Missions/Evangelism Begins with the Loving Desire of God</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Exodus 19:3-6 Isaiah 49:6 Matthew 9:37-38 Matthew 10:5-15 Matthew 13:1-43 Luke 15:1-31 John 3:16 Romans 10:1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Evangelism/Missions Meets the Ultimate Human Need</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 10:5-15 Luke 10:1-12 Matthew 24:14 Ephesians 2:1-10 Romans 10:1-2, 8-15 Romans 3:21-31 Acts 4:12</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Missions/Evangelism Responds Obediently to Christ's Commission</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John 20:21 Matthew 28:18-20 Revelation 7:9 Revelation 5:9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Evangelism/Missions Operates in God's Promise of Divine Power</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Acts 1:8 Acts 2:1-12 Acts 2:14-41 Acts 2:42-47</p>

Encourage Application: *Motivations for Evangelism.* Ask class members to bow their heads and reflect on the following statements as you read them aloud:

- “I work with you everyday. I talk and joke a lot, but deep inside I am lonely and empty. Please reach out to me.”—A friend at work
- “I attend your church every week. I almost understand what it means to follow Christ, but I am not completely sure. Can you help me?”—A church acquaintance
- “I am hungry and have no place to live. I do not need a lecture; I need help getting back on my feet. Will you talk to me? Will you help me?”—An unknown stranger
- “I am enlisting people to help paint a Habitat house this Saturday. Will you give a few hours to this special project?”—A friend at church
- “I am in charge of our church’s outreach ministry. We have many people to see, but only a few people come each week to visit. Will you come help us spread the good news of Christ to others?”—A church leader
- “I created you. I saved you so that you might tell others about me. Are you willing to let me use you to make a difference in my kingdom?”—God

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

Religious Freedom and Separation of Church and State

TEACHING AIM

To help the class summarize biblical teachings on religious liberty and the separation of church and state

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Ask the class to listen to the story of Obadiah Holmes as told by you or a previously enlisted class member. This story is near the end of the lesson commentary. Then ask participants to read the quotation from George W. Truett near the beginning of the lesson commentary. Divide the marker board into two columns with the headings *Wavering* and *Unwavering*. Ask the class to cite some examples illustrating how Baptists might be wavering from historic Baptist church/state positions and examples of Baptists being unwavering. List the examples on the board. Make the transition into the Bible study by indicating the need for Baptists today to understand what the Bible teaches about religious freedom and separation of church and state.

Guide the Study

2. In advance prepare a poster with the following teaching outline:

Religious Freedom and Separation of Church and State

1. A Taxing Question (Matthew 22:15–22)
2. An Established Authority (Acts 5:27–29;
Romans 13:1–7)
3. A Proper Response (1 Timothy 2:1–3;
1 Peter 2:13–15)

3. Lecture briefly on the positions of the Pharisees and Herodians in regard to their relationship with Roman occupation. Read or ask a volunteer to read Matthew 22:15–22. Ask the class to respond to the following questions:
- (1) Why did the Pharisees and Herodians think the question “Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?” would trap Jesus (22:17)?
 - (2) Why were the Pharisees and Herodians amazed at Jesus’ response?
 - (3) What does this passage reveal about religious freedom and separation of church and state?
4. Refer to Acts 5, and summarize the events recorded in verses 17–26. Then invite a class member to read verses 27–29 aloud while the class listens for Peter’s response to the council. Ask what Peter’s response suggests about the relationship between church and state. Refer to the stories of Thomas Helwys and Lewis Craig under the heading, “Applications of the Principle,” in the lesson comments.
5. Ask class members to help make a list of biblical ideas related to civil authority by studying Romans 13:1–7. Read one verse at a time, pausing between the reading of each verse to determine the meaning. Write a summary sentence or phrase on the marker board before proceeding to the next verse.

6. Prepare a handout for each participant as suggested below. Ask pairs to work together to complete the handout. After sufficient time for study and completion of the handout, use the content to lead a discussion of the biblical material and the group response.

A Proper Response

1 Timothy 2:1-3; 1 Peter 2:13-17

Match each statement below with the most appropriate Bible passage:

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| ___ 1. Christians should exercise their liberty as servants of God and not as an excuse for evil. | a. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 |
| ___ 2. Christians should live as good citizens so as to show a positive witness. | b. 1 Timothy 2:3 |
| ___ 3. Christians should pray for civil authorities. | c. 1 Peter 2:13-14 |
| ___ 4. Christians should live as good citizens to please God. | d. 1 Peter 2:15 |
| ___ 5. Christians should submit to civil authority. | e. 1 Peter 2:16 |

(Answers: 1-e, 2-d, 3-a, 4-b, 5-c)

Encourage Application

7. Divide the class into six groups. If the class is small give assignments to individuals or pairs. The issues to be discussed are current topics about which there is disagreement. Half of the groups will list “pro” (for) arguments and the other half will list “con” (against) arguments for the assigned issue. Prepare the following assignments:
- (1) “Pro”: Constitutional amendment allowing school-sponsored prayer in public schools
 - (2) “Con”: Constitutional amendment allowing school-sponsored prayer in public schools

- (3) “Pro”: Displaying the Ten Commandments in schools and other public areas
- (4) “Con”: Displaying the Ten Commandments in schools and other public areas
- (5) “Pro”: Providing vouchers to parents to be used in private schools
- (6) “Con”: Providing vouchers to parents to be used in private schools

Call on one person from each group to report, and lead a discussion of each issue after both “pro” and “con” arguments have been presented.

- 8. Based on the biblical responses examined, ask the class to determine some do’s and don’t’s related to church/state issues.
- 9. Close the class with a prayer for civil authorities and for Christians as they relate to both God and government.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Role Play.* Before class ask two members to role play an argument related to prayer at public school football games. Coach the members to begin their argument without introduction, remaining in their seats. They should give opposing views on the subject. Allow the role play to go on for a short time before interrupting. Inform the class that the argument was planned. Then make the transition into the lesson by indicating that the Bible study will help the class make decisions about such matters based on what the Bible teaches.

Guide the Study: *Panel Discussion.* Enlist three members who will make five-minute presentations as part of a panel. Use the suggested teaching outline to make assignments. In class ask the presenters to sit behind a table in the front of the room to make their speeches. After each presentation allow the participants to ask questions of the presenter. Add

appropriate thoughts from your own study. After all of the speeches have been given, ask the class to make a list of biblical principles related to religious freedom and separation of church and state. List these principles on a marker board or poster.

Encourage Application: *Resource Person.* Invite an attorney who understands church/state issues. Allow ten or fifteen minutes near the end of the class period for the attorney to speak briefly and answer questions class members have about current issues related to the subject.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

Salvation Only by Grace Through Faith

TEACHING AIM

To help the class explain the way of salvation

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Write on the board: “Fear!” Comment that all human beings fear something, such as heights or darkness. Ask the class to help you list on the board some other things people are afraid of.
2. Point out that some fears even relate to the spiritual life, such as these: whether God will love us or save us if we are sinful; whether we have done all the right things—dotted all the *Is* and crossed all the *Ts*—in order to be assured of salvation. Suggest that today’s lesson will remind us of the way to salvation.

Guide the Study

3. Referring to Acts 16:22–24, point out that Paul and Silas had reason to be despondent. They had been ridiculed, beaten severely, and thrown into the innermost part of a prison. Encourage your class to imagine what they must have heard there, how the place must have smelled in the midst of such human suffering, and how they must have felt physically.

4. Invite the class to read Acts 16:25 silently to see how Paul and Silas behaved under these circumstances. Refer to these thoughts from the lesson comments under “Midnight Salvation (Acts 16:25–34)”:
 . . . We have been saved from the punishment of sin (regeneration), we are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification), and we will be saved from the presence of sin (glorification). God implants saving grace in our souls when we become believers. How we respond to that grace in times of trial says more about us than about God. Paul and Silas responded with faith and courage.
5. Write on the board these points that refer to the Philippian jailer:
 - The greatest crisis of his life
 - The greatest question of his life
 - The greatest gift of his life Ask someone to read Acts 16:26–34 aloud. Ask the class to listen for how these bulleted points summarize these verses. Invite responses to each point.
6. Now focus on verse 31. Ask, What was required for the jailer’s salvation? (belief in the Lord Jesus) Then ask the class to list ideas about what was *not* required. Examples of responses include these: baptism (which is a result of, not a condition for salvation); good works (The jailer’s kindness was a result, not a condition, of salvation.); giving money; having great knowledge of Scripture; having a certain moral stance on an issue.
7. Share this quotation from Dr. Bill Pinson, Executive Director Emeritus of the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas: “Thus Baptists declare it is this unique grace/faith that brings salvation—nothing else . . . not grace/faith plus church membership, or plus baptism, or plus good works, or plus sacrament but grace/faith plus nothing.”¹
8. Ask, Who can receive salvation? Invite members to read aloud with you Romans 1:16–18 in order to answer the question. Use the Scripture from the lesson comments so all will read from the same translation. Receive responses after the reading. Point out that

although it is clear that everyone who believes receives salvation (verse 16) and is made righteous by faith (verse 17), verse 18 clarifies that with God it is *not* “anything goes!” God’s wrath is real, but all may receive God’s grace through belief in Christ.

9. Remind the class that the concept of grace is not limited to something we received in the past. As the lesson comments state, “The Baptist doctrine of salvation by grace through faith means we share the gospel each moment by how we live, how we present ‘Christ in us.’” With that thought in mind, have someone read aloud Galatians 2:20. Note that we are extensions of Christ—of God’s grace—in the world.
10. Note that a favorite Scripture among Baptist believers is Ephesians 2:8–10, and ask the class to read these verses silently. Note that the Greek verb for “saved” in verse 8 implies a process but suggests that the process is completed and existing in a finished state. The meaning thus is that we *have been saved*. In other New Testament passages, it is established that we are *being saved* (see 1 Corinthians 1:18), and that we *will be saved* (see Romans 13:11; Hebrews 9:27–28).
11. Ask the class to consider the implications of living in this grace process—living out grace in our daily lives. Grace saved us, and grace continuously saves us. What attitudes should we thus show in how we live?

Encourage Application

12. Circle back to the fear issue mentioned at the beginning of the lesson by asking, How can an understanding of salvation through grace affect our fears? our attitudes towards others’ need to be saved? our pride? other areas of our lives?
13. Set aside several minutes for guided meditation and prayer at the end of the session, asking members to close their eyes and converse with God about these issues:
 - Have I believed in the Lord Jesus in order to be saved?
 - How has God shown his grace towards me in the past?

- How will grace save me when this life is over?
- During the coming week, how might God's grace in my life be evident?

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Case Studies.* Read these case studies and invite responses:

- A. Jessica, a teenager, has come to you after hearing a sermon. The sermon implied that if she had not followed a certain process step by step, had not prayed a certain prayer, or had not done certain things since the time she thought she was saved, she probably was not saved. Although Jessica had thought she was saved at a young age and had made a profession of faith, she is now wondering whether she did the right things to be saved. What would you say to her?
- B. You work with a very moral, upstanding person. Everyone knows that Sam is kind, that he loves his family, and that he is sincere in all his moral views. One day Sam comments that he believes that since God loves everybody, one sincere religion is as good as another. How would you respond to his comment?

Guide the Study: *Scripture Reflection.* Invite someone to read aloud Romans 12:1–3. Based upon these Scripture verses, ask members to name the ways in which grace should affect our daily lives. List their responses on the board.

Encourage Application: *Hymn Reflection.* Ask members to read all the stanzas of “Amazing Grace” from a hymnal. After each stanza is read, ask the class to reflect on how it reflects the biblical truths discussed today. Inquire, Which of the stanzas seem to be most relevant in your life right now?

Notes

1. William M. Pinson, Jr., Sermon, “The Baptist Way,” 1996. (Provided by the Baptist Distinctives Committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, Texas.)

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

The Security of the Believer

TEACHING AIM

To lead the class to summarize the New Testament teachings on Christian perseverance and its implications for their lives

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Prepare a handout like the following:

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT SURE
1) The idea of “once saved, always saved” leads people to sin more.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2) People who say they believe in Jesus but keep on sinning are lost.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3) People who do not confess their sins and ask for forgiveness regularly cannot be Christians.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4) Salvation cannot be both a gift of grace and a product of one’s good works.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Distribute the handout to participants, and ask them to check the space by each statement that most reflects their belief. After everyone has completed the opinionaire, read each statement aloud, and ask for opinions to be shared. Participants can share why they believe as they do, but try not to allow debate about whether an item is correct or incorrect. Make the transition into the Bible study by stating that of all Baptist beliefs, the doctrine of eternal security of the believer is probably the most controversial. Suggest that the study today will help us discover what the Bible says about this doctrine.

Guide the Study

2. On the reverse side of the opinionaire used in step 1, prepare a study guide like the following to be used in examining the biblical evidence for eternal security and objections to this doctrine. Leave space between the questions for answers.

Study Guide

- A. Biblical Evidence for Eternal Security
 1. John 10:27–29
 - a. Verse 27. Why do the words, “My sheep,” give believers a sense of security? See also John 10:11, 15; Acts 20:28.
 - b. Verse 28. What are the implications of eternal life being provided as a gift? See also Ephesians 2:8–9; Galatians 2:21; Romans 8:17; 11:6.
 - c. Verses 28b–29. Note the statements, “no one will snatch them out of My hand” and “no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” How do these statements affirm the doctrine of eternal security? See also Ephesians 1:13b.

2. 2 Timothy 1:12. What does this verse indicate about Paul's belief in eternal security?
 3. 1 Peter 1:3–5. What do these verses indicate about Peter's belief in eternal security?
 4. Romans 8:31–39. How do these verses attest to the validity of the doctrine of eternal security?
- B. Objections to the Doctrine of Eternal Security
1. *What about the people who confessed Christ but now are living wicked, ungodly lives?* What do Matthew 7:21–23 and 1 John 2:19 teach about people who say they believed in Christ but do not live like it? What is the difference between a person who is a true believer and commits sin and one who continues in a sinful lifestyle?
 2. *Wouldn't the doctrine of eternal security of the believer be an encouragement to sin?* How does the idea of believers having a changed nature answer this objection?
 3. *But what about the verse that says, "Work out your own salvation." Doesn't that mean that we must continue to work for our salvation?* How would you interpret Philippians 2:12 after reading Philippians 2:13?
 4. *Isn't there a verse that says you can "fall from grace"?* How should Galatians 5:4 be interpreted based on the teachings of the Letter to the Galatians as a whole?
 5. *But isn't there a verse in the Bible that talks about those who "fall away"?* How should Hebrews 6:4–6 be interpreted?
3. Lead a discussion of the Bible passages by using the study guide. Spend most of the time on the "Biblical Evidence for Eternal Security." If time becomes a factor, ask individuals, pairs, or small groups

to study one objection each and briefly report thoughts to the class. Supplement the reports based on your own study.

Encourage Application

4. Ask participants to look again at the statements on the opinionaire. Has anyone changed an opinion? Encourage everyone to defend positions based on the Bible study.
5. Show a poster that says, “One who is truly regenerated will continue in faith and will be finally delivered from sin.”² Ask everyone to evaluate this statement in the light of the Bible study.
6. Read one or more case studies to the class and ask volunteers to share suggestions.
 - A co-worker says, “I hope I am saved. I go to church, give offerings, and try to live right.” What could you say in response?
 - Your neighbor says, “I have trusted Christ as my Savior, but sometimes I doubt that I am truly a Christian.” How could you respond?
 - A friend says, “I am just as good as some of those hypocrites in your church. If they are Christians, I am not sure I want to be one.” What could you say?

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Agree-Disagree Activity.* Place placards on the four walls of your room that say *Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree.* Place a placard that says *Not Sure* in the middle of the room. Ask participants to move to the area that most reflects their belief about the statements given in the opinionaire in step 1 of the teaching plan. Encourage volunteers to share their thoughts.

Guide the Study: *Debate.* In advance ask two members to prepare five-minute speeches which present the affirmative and negative positions

of the following debate proposition: *Resolved that anyone who is a true believer in Jesus as Savior will always be saved.* Before the speeches are delivered, divide the class into affirmative and negative sides. If the class is large, form two or more small groups on each side. After the speeches are delivered, affirmative and negative sides will plan two-minute rebuttal speeches based on a study of the focal Bible passages, their own views, and the lesson commentary. After a period of study, ask for a representative from each side to present a rebuttal speech.

Encourage Application: *Role Play.* Use one or more case studies from step 6 of the teaching plan. Ask two members to dialogue about the situation. One person will play the role of the co-worker, neighbor, or friend. The other person will play the role of a Christian witness. After a brief dialogue, ask the class to make suggestions on ways to improve the effectiveness of the witness. Repeat the process using another case and two more members.

Notes

2. Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption*, 247.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

Soul Competency and the Priesthood of the Believer

TEACHING AIM

To lead the class to identify implications of soul competency and the priesthood of the believer

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Share this story: The story is told that when Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes walked the aisle to become a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., a Chinese laundry man came forward at the same time. In receiving them both into membership, the pastor commented that the ground is level at the foot of the cross.¹
2. Point out that Baptists have long cherished the *right* of every person to approach God directly, without a human mediator. Note that we have taught also the corresponding *responsibility* of every Christian. Suggest that today we will examine this belief—soul competency and the priesthood of the believer—based on the Scriptures.

Guide the Study

3. Before class, collect about four pictures of several people of different ages and backgrounds—such as an adorable baby, someone who looks “down and out,” a person at church or in worship, a teen in unconventional dress, etc. Displaying these photos, ask, Who is made in God’s image? Some of these? All of these? Suggest that the class join you in examining the Scriptures to consider what being made in God’s image means.
4. Read Genesis 1:26–27 aloud. Refer members to the ideas in the lesson comments on ways we reflect God’s image. That is,
 - We can think, make decisions, and accept responsibility.
 - We are by nature religious beings.
 - We are moral beings, recognizing good and evil.

Thus, as the lesson comments state in the section on Genesis 1:26–27, “We have soul competency. God made us in the divine image, making us responsible for our decisions about relating to the Lord. No one can force true belief.”

5. Ask someone to read aloud Jeremiah 31:29–34 as others follow. Ask the class to listen for thoughts that relate to soul competency. After the reading, point out that in the past, the decisions of the head of the group affected all in that group, as is seen in verse 29. Ask, Who is considered responsible according to verses 29–30?
6. Write on the board, “A New Covenant.” Ask, How did the emphasis of accountability shift in verses 30–35? Who is accountable for choosing God? Can a parent choose God for a child? a child for his or her parent? a pastor for a church attendee? Can you coerce your neighbor to believe? Emphasize that others can lead, teach, and urge, but each person is accountable to God for himself or herself.
7. Invite someone to read Matthew 16:16–17 aloud. Share information from the lesson comments about the setting for these verses. Ask, According to Jesus, how did Simon Peter know that Jesus was

- the Christ? Emphasize that God revealed the truth directly to Peter.
8. Ask members to read or recite aloud together John 3:16. Note that there is no elaborate hierarchy involved in receiving salvation. Again, we deal directly with God, and God deals directly with us.
 9. Write on the board these two columns: The Privilege of a Priest; The Responsibility of a Priest. Ask, From what we have studied so far, what insights do you have in these areas? (List the class's responses in the columns.)
 10. Point out that after reading 1 Peter 2:4–10, we may add more insights. Read the passage aloud, with members following. Use the ideas in the lesson comments to point out what likely was happening to the readers of this letter. Ask, How did the writer comfort them?
 11. To find additional insights to list on the board about the privilege of a priest and the responsibility of a priest, form two groups in the class. Ask one group to concentrate on verses 5–6, and another to focus on verses 9–10. Then ask each group whether they have other ideas to list in the two columns on the board.

Encourage Application

12. Write “Priesthood of the Believer” on the board. Then cross out and add letters so that the phrase reads “Priesthood of Believers.” Note that this belief applies not only to the individual, but also to individuals who have formed the church. Share insights from the last two paragraphs of the lesson comments on this topic as needed.
13. Looking at the two columns on the board, ask members to discuss how their church functions as a priesthood of believers. Are believers in your church encouraged to relate directly to God in worship, service, Bible study and interpretation, and so forth? Do we allow the “messiness” of the diversity that results? Or do we look to one group or person to speak for us to God, and for God to us?

14. Emphasize that to be a priest, we must also be a disciple—a daily follower and student of Christ. Ask the class to pray for that sort of commitment so that we may serve God well in our priesthood.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Case Study.* Share this case study and ask for responses: Jan’s pastor has urged her and others to vote a certain way in an upcoming election. In fact, he says he feels led by God to speak out for and against certain candidates and issues. To what extent should Jan follow her pastor’s advice? On what should she base her decision?

Guide the Study: *Scripture Searching.* Review Matthew 27:50–51 and Ephesians 2:18. Ask, How do these Scriptures about the crucifixion and access to God relate to one another? Note especially that the veil’s being torn from top to bottom in the temple suggests God’s action in inviting us into his immediate presence.

Encourage Application: *Sermon Quotations.* Print out the following bulleted quotes on a handout. Have members read the quotes from a 1920 sermon by George W. Truett, delivered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. Consider whether the quotes are still relevant:

- “Every one must give account of himself to God. There can be no sponsors or deputies or proxies in such a vital matter. Each one must repent for himself and believe for himself, and be baptized for himself, and answer to God for himself, both in time and eternity.”
- “Let the state and the church, let the institution, however dear, and the person however near, stand aside, and let the individual soul make its own direct and immediate response to God. . . . The undelegated sovereignty of Christ makes it forever impossible for His saving grace to be manipulated by any system of human mediation whatsoever.”
- “Out of these two fundamental principles, the supreme authority of the Scriptures and the right of private judgment, have come all the

historic protests . . . against unscriptural creeds, polity and rites, and against the . . . assumption of religious authority over men's consciences, whether by church or by state. Baptists regard as an enormity any attempt to force the conscience, or to constrain men, by outward penalties, to this or that form of religious belief."²

Notes

1. Paul W. Powell, Sermon, "The Priesthood of Every Believer," 1996. (Provided by the Baptist Distinctives Committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, Texas.)
2. See George W. Truett's sermon, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," in *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, ed. H. Leon McBeth (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 470. The full text of the sermon can also be accessed on the internet at this address: <http://www.bjcpa.org/pubs/fultruet.html>

Symbolic Understanding of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

TEACHING AIM

To lead participants to describe the Scriptural view of the nature of baptism and the Lord's Supper

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Ask, Have you (or anyone you know) ever lost a wedding ring? How did you feel? Why? Point out that a ring is only a symbol of the marriage; it is not nearly so important as the marriage itself. Having said that, symbols are important! A wedding ring says to the world that you have committed yourself to another person, above everyone else. Thus people search diligently when they lose a symbol of something so precious. They prize that symbol.
2. Suggest that today we will look at two symbols Baptists value because they remind us of our commitments to Christ. They are two ceremonial ordinances that Christ himself instituted—baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Guide the Study

3. Ask someone to read aloud Mark 1:9–11 about Jesus’ baptism and to consider what Jesus’ baptism meant. After receiving responses, note that Jesus did not need to repent and be saved, but in this act he publicly identified with those committed to God. It was a symbol of commitment to God. Even today, baptism does not save us. Rather, baptism testifies to our commitment to God.
4. Ask members to review silently the lesson comments on the history of baptism, which are found in the last three paragraphs under the heading, “Baptism, a Symbol of Commitment (Mark 1:9–11).” The section to be reviewed begins with “In the early 1600s . . .” and ends with “. . . what the Bible says.” Ask the class to be prepared to finish this sentence: One thing I learned from this history is
5. Refer to the next passage of Scripture, Romans 6:1–7, and summarize the lesson comments about the background of Romans. Note that Paul’s Letter to the Romans gives us important theological insights into baptism’s importance to Christians. Ask a member to read aloud Romans 6:1–7, with others following and listening for how baptism symbolizes the experience of salvation.
6. After the reading, point out that for Paul, baptism meant that we identified with Christ in
 - His death
 - His power
 - His promise

Write these bulleted phrases on the board, and ask members to identify phrases from verses 3–7 that show these ideas. Consider these possible answers: His death (buried with him, “united with him in a death like his,” “crucified with him”); His power (raised, “united with him in a resurrection like his”); His promise (“walk in newness of life,” “united with him in a resurrection like his”)

7. Also in relation to these three areas, ask: According to these verses, how do we die to sin? How do we walk “in newness of life”? What does God promise us?
8. Summarize these beliefs about baptism the class has explored:
 - a. We are saved not by baptism, but by grace.
 - b. Baptism is for believers only.
 - c. Baptists immerse because of the biblical example. (To reinforce this idea, refer to the sidebar, “The Background of Baptism.”)
 - d. Baptism symbolizes to the world the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—and our relationship with him.
9. Note the prominent location of the baptistry in Baptist church buildings. Also note that Baptists have found rivers, pools, and other places to baptize. Ask, How do these practices suggest the importance of the symbol?
10. Now invite the class to read about another important celebration for Christians, the Lord’s Supper, in 1 Corinthians 11:23–29. Invite someone to read the passage aloud, and encourage the class to listen for ideas about the meaning of the Lord’s Supper.
11. Note that believers have used wine and grape juice; loaves, crackers, and unleavened bread—all as “elements” for celebrating the Supper. But the main point is what these physical things symbolize. Ask what that is, according to Scripture (see 11:26, “the Lord’s death”).
12. Note that taking the bread and the cup is only a part of the Lord’s Supper. According to verses 27–29, this must also be a serious exercise in self-examination. If we examine our hearts and renew our commitment to Christ during this ceremony, our practical day-to-day lives will be changed—in remembrance of Christ!
13. Write “communion” on the board. Ask, Why is the Lord’s Supper often referred to as “communion”? Suggest that the Lord’s Supper is shared in the presence of the Lord and one’s fellow believers. Note that both baptism and the Lord’s Supper are observed in the

presence of others. The two observances strengthen the body of Christ and give participants the opportunity to proclaim their identification with Christ.

Encourage Application

14. Ask members to consider the past, present, and future when next celebrating the Lord's Supper:
 - The past—What did Christ's death do for me?
 - The present—What is my present spiritual condition?
 - The future—I'll "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (11:26).
15. Ask the class to consider how we can maintain the personal meaningfulness of every baptism we observe and every Lord's Supper in which we participate. For example, how might we personally prepare for these experiences? What can our local church do to make them more meaningful?

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Symbols.* Ask class members what their country's flag means to them. Note that although the flag in itself is not freedom or our country, it is still deeply important and should thus be respected as a symbol. This same idea is true of the serious symbolism of baptism and the Lord's Supper. As the Scriptures reveal, they are not our salvation, but they symbolize our relationship with Christ. Thus we are to take them seriously.

Guide the Study: *What the Ordinances Teach.* George W. Truett called baptism and the Lord's Supper "teaching ordinances."¹ As you study the Scriptures for this lesson, list on the board what each ordinance teaches us. In other words, what does it show us about Christ, about ourselves, and about our lives in Christ?

Encourage Application: *Discussion Question.* Point out that Baptists have insisted that a person be converted before baptism and that often in the past, a person had to give an oral testimony to the church before being accepted for baptism. Baptist historian William Estep adds: “Since it is faith in Christ and not baptism that saves, it is far better to delay baptism when the validity of a profession of faith is in doubt than to baptize prematurely.”² Do you agree or disagree?

Encourage Application: *Case Study.* Refer to and discuss the case study about the Lord’s Supper in the sidebar in the lesson comments.

Notes

1. See George W. Truett’s sermon, “Baptists and Religious Liberty,” in *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, ed. H. Leon McBeth (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 470. The full text of the sermon can also be accessed on the internet at this address: <http://www.bjcpa.org/pubs/fultruet.html>
2. William R. Estep, *Why Baptists? A Study of Baptist Faith and Heritage* (Dallas: BAPTISTWAY, 1997).

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR

Voluntary Cooperation Among Churches

TEACHING AIM

To help participants describe the New Testament pattern Baptists follow in relationships with fellow churches

TEACHING PLAN

Connect with Life

1. In advance, write the following teaching outline on a marker board or poster:

VOLUNTARY COOPERATION AMONG CHURCHES

1. Cooperative Missions (Acts 15:1–2, 22–33)
 2. Voluntary Cooperation (Galatians 2:1–10)
 3. Cooperative Giving (2 Corinthians 8:1–8, 16—9:6)
-
2. Have available twenty-five large paper clips. Ask a volunteer to attempt to put all of the clips together to form a chain in one minute. Time the volunteer and count the number of clips he or she was able to put together. Take the clips apart and ask five volunteers to cooperate with each other to make a chain using the twenty-five

clips. Give the volunteers a few seconds to plan a strategy for accomplishing the goal. Time them to see how fast they can make the chain. Make the transition into the Bible study by indicating that churches also can accomplish some of their tasks best through voluntary cooperation. Point out that Baptist churches are autonomous and independent, but most Baptists like to work together with others of like faith and order.

Guide the Study

3. In one or two minutes, tell the story of the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13—14, closing with the reading of Acts 14:27–28. Use a teaching map of the journey if possible. Emphasize that Gentiles were being saved. Ask participants to listen for the concern of the men from Judea as a volunteer reads Acts 15:1–2. Ask members to share reasons the men from Judea felt circumcision was so important. After brief responses continue to tell the story of the Jerusalem conference as reported in Acts 15:3–21. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 15:22–33 aloud.
4. Distribute a handout with the following true/false statements or read the statements asking for true/false responses:

True or False?

- _____ (1) The Jerusalem church had no authority over the church at Antioch.
- _____ (2) The church at Antioch desired to be in fellowship with the Jerusalem Christians.
- _____ (3) The apostles, elders, and the whole church participated in the decision-making process.
- _____ (4) Judas and Silas were sent to Antioch to make sure the church carried out the edicts of the Jerusalem conference.
- _____ (5) Gentile Christians were encouraged to be sensitive to the deep-seated customs of the Jewish Christians.

Use the responses to these statements as a way of leading a discussion of the ideas given in the lesson commentary. Only number 4 is false.

5. Point out that Galatians 2:1–10 reinforces some of the ideas related to the Jerusalem conference. Ask half of the class to listen for evidences that the Jerusalem church had no authority over the church at Antioch. The other half will listen for evidences that the Christian leaders desired to work together in harmony. Ask a volunteer to read Galatians 2:1–10. Use comments from the two listening teams to lead a discussion on these two ideas.
6. Using a map to indicate the locations of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth, present a brief lecture on the offering referenced in 2 Corinthians 8–9. Write the assignments listed below on large sheets of paper and attach them to the four walls of the room. Divide the class into four groups, and provide a marker for each group so comments can be written on the large sheets. If the class is small, give assignments to individuals or pairs.
 - *Assignment 1.* Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 8:1–8. What does this passage say about the attitude of Christians who give?
 - *Assignment 2.* Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 8:1–8. What does this passage say about leaders who encourage Christians to give?
 - *Assignment 3.* Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 8:16–24. What does this passage say about the administration of the gifts?
 - *Assignment 4.* Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 9:1–6. What does this passage say about the promotion of cooperative giving?Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 8:1–8 prior to reports on assignments 1 and 2. Hear reports and ask the class to share ideas. Follow the same pattern for the other reports.

Encourage Application

7. Ask participants to read silently the sidebar, “Cooperation.” Have extra copies available for members who do not bring their lesson

commentaries. After the reading, ask the class to evaluate the statement in light of the biblical principles discovered in the Bible study.

8. Make two columns on the marker board. Write “Ways We Cooperate” on the left side and “Ways We Could Cooperate” on the right side. Ask participants to list actions in both columns. Evaluate the lists.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING IDEAS

Connect with Life: *Creative Drawing.* Distribute sheets of paper and pencils to everyone present. Ask half of the class to work in pairs to draw a picture of a dog. These pairs can confer with each other and look at each other’s work. One person is to draw the front part of the dog, and the other person is to draw the back part of the dog. Ask the other half of the class to work in pairs to draw a dog, but they cannot look at their partner’s drawing. One person will draw the front half and the other the back half without any knowledge of the type or size of the dog. After the drawings are complete, compare the drawings to see which pairs did the best job of accomplishing the task. Make the transition into the Bible study by indicating that in most cases cooperative efforts produce better results, and the Bible study relates to ways churches work together in voluntary cooperation.

Guide the Study: *Work Groups.* Divide the class into small groups of three to six people. Ask half of the groups to study Acts 15 and Galatians 2. The other half of the groups will study 2 Corinthians 8—9. All groups are to make a list of biblical patterns related to voluntary cooperation as indicated in the Bible passages. Allow about fifteen minutes for the study. Ask for reports and make a composite list of the patterns discovered. Ask the class to evaluate the composite list to determine how well the group agrees with the principles. Then ask the class to compare the list to the statement on “Cooperation” in the lesson commentary.

Encourage Application: *Research Report.* Ask a member to research how your church is cooperating with other churches in your association, state convention, and national Baptist groups. The report needs to include personal participation and financial support. After the report ask the class to evaluate how well your church is following biblical patterns and suggest ways your church could cooperate more effectively.

HOW TO ORDER MORE

Beliefs Important to Baptists

TITLE OF ITEM	PRICE	QUANTITY	COST
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