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Free

Faithful

**A Curriculum for Sharing the
Story of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
with Youth and Young Adults**

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Produced by
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina

Introduction

These materials have grown out of the recognition by the Ministry Councils and leadership of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina that we need to share the story and principles of the CBF movement with the young people in our churches. Helping youth to understand these historic Baptist principles and to become invested in the grass-roots, lay-shaped movement that is CBF is vital to the growth, and even the long-term survival, of both.

The series includes four lessons, but in most cases, it is recommended that they be used in six different sessions. Instructions for doing so are included in Lesson 1. The lessons begin with introductory and historical material that can be shared with the youth by whatever methods the leaders think appropriate for their group, depending on the ages and size of the group. Each lesson also includes Focal Scripture passages and a variety of Activities and Questions for Discussion. You will also find resource pages and supplemental materials that you may use for further study, should you choose. It is not intended that every group should do every activity. Instead, a variety of suggestions has been included so that you may choose those which will be most effective in your setting. Because the materials are designed for youth, the activities include several multi-media suggestions, including ideas for internet activities, discussions of song lyrics and movie nights.

While these lessons were written primarily with youth in mind, they may also be used for adult small groups or Sunday School classes that would like to learn more about CBF. While some adult groups may not wish to use all of the games and activities, you may find that some adults would enjoy the variety of learning experiences.

I would like to express special thanks to Dr. Pam Durso, Associate Executive Director of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, for consulting on several of the historical passages included here. I am also grateful to Linda Davis and Denise Bennett, the administrative staff at Lakeside Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, NC, for their assistance in proofreading these materials. Special thanks to Natalie Aho of CBF of North Carolina for formatting these lessons for download and to members of the Faith Development Council and CBF of NC staff for their support and their work as co-laborers in the CBF movement.

And I am grateful to the staff, congregation, and especially the youth of Lakeside Baptist Church who remind me every day what it means to be free and faithful Baptists.

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Lesson 1: What Do the Words Mean?

*This Lesson is divided into three parts that may better be used as separate lessons. If your typical schedule allows for a 30-45 minute study, you should plan to do these three parts separately and choose from the “Activities and Questions for Discussion” those which best fit your time-frame and circumstances.

Part 1: Let’s Start in the Middle:

Our middle name is Baptist, but our historic Baptist identity is essential for understanding who the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is. Although many people may think the name Baptist primarily identifies us by our practice of believers’ baptism by immersion,¹ our mode of baptism is only part of what designates us as Baptist.

The most important of these determinations is that we affirm the Lordship of Christ, meaning that we look to the life of Christ as the example after which we pattern our life of faith and to the death and resurrection of Christ as the act in which God offered redemption for us and all of creation. Faith in Christ is central to our understanding of every other aspect of what it means to be Baptist.

The historical movement with which we most closely identify is one begun in England in the early 1600’s by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, two ministers who, frustrated with the practices of the Church of England, aligned themselves with the Separatists and sought reform. While Baptist doctrine has always maintained strong connections with the theological foundations of the early church fathers and mothers, early Baptists also relied heavily on Protestant Reformers for ideas about church practices. Influenced by Martin Luther’s notion of the priesthood of the believer, and the Anabaptist views of believer’s baptism, local church autonomy, separation of church and state, and non-creedalism (*each of these ideas will be developed in later chapters*), Smyth and Helwys left England because of the threat of persecution and led a small group of brave, like-minded believers to Amsterdam. In 1609, Smyth baptized himself, and then the rest of the group. They believed that since the Church of England was a false church, their earlier baptisms were invalid and that baptism should be reserved for those who made a public confession of faith. Although the two would later part ways, and Helwys would eventually be arrested for his heretical teachings and die in prison, the movement was born, and future Baptists would continue to fight for the freedom of individuals, local congregations and all religious people.²

Once Europeans began traveling across the Atlantic Ocean, it didn’t take long for the Baptist movement to take hold in the New World. In 1638, Roger Williams helped to found the First Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, the only one of the thirteen original colonies to observe complete religious freedom for its citizens. The fiery preaching of the revivals of the Great Awakenings in the mid 1700’s and early 1800’s would expand the size and influence of evangelical groups, including Baptists, especially in the southern United States. But the ideals of Smyth and Helwys would remain the guiding principles of free and faithful Baptists everywhere.

1 Some groups may have a firm grasp on the concept of believers’ baptism by immersion and may not need further explanation. Simply put, it is the practice of baptizing those who have made a public confession of faith in Jesus, with the assumption that those persons have reached an age suitable for understanding such a commitment. Immersion refers to the mode of baptism where the person is completely submerged in water. Although almost all Baptists practice believers’ baptism by immersion, some congregations accept as valid those who have been baptized by other means. If your group has questions about your congregation’s teachings on baptism, you may want to invite your pastor to lead such a discussion with you. For a more complete understanding of the biblical and historical foundations of baptism in the Baptist tradition, see R. Wayne Stacy’s article on baptism in *A Baptist’s Theology*, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1999.

2 H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*. 1987.

Even with splits among U.S. Baptists, first between North and South prior to the American Civil War, and then between moderates and conservatives in the South beginning in the 1980's, many Baptists have attempted to keep these historic Baptist principles alive.³ The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was formed in the early 1990's out of a convergence of these traditions, and the movement called CBF still strives to remain, at its heart, true to its Baptist heritage.⁴

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship affirms these Baptist Principles as part of our core values:

***Soul Freedom** - We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We affirm the freedom and responsibility of every person to relate directly to God without the imposition of creed or the control of clergy or government.

***Bible Freedom** - We believe in the authority of Scripture. We believe the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, is central to the life of the individual and the church. We affirm the freedom and right of every Christian to interpret and apply scripture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

***Church Freedom** - We believe in the autonomy of every local church. We believe Baptist churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate as they deem appropriate in the larger Body of Christ.

***Religious Freedom** - We believe in the freedom of religion, freedom for religion, and freedom from religion. We support the separation of church and state.

3 These events are described in "CBF 101: An Introduction to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," written by Dr. Larry Hovis, Executive Coordinator of CBF of North Carolina, an excerpt of which can be found on page 11. For a more detailed treatment of these events, see Walter B. Shurden's *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, Mercer University Press, 1993.

4 If your group is interested in learning more about the beliefs and practices of other denominations, you might consider having representatives from various churches come to share information with your group. One resource for information on a variety of religious groups, both Christian and non-Christian, is a workbook published by Abingdon Press called *To the Point - Religions: Encountering People of Other Faiths*. It is available from Cokesbury. Although it was published in 1995 and some of the data is outdated, it is a great resource for introducing youth to other faith traditions.

Part 2: Why *Cooperative Baptists*?⁵

As much as Baptists are built on principles of autonomy and freedom, we recognize the importance of cooperating to achieve shared goals. We cooperate voluntarily as individuals, congregations and institutions who share a similar view of what it means to be Baptist. We believe that by uniting our efforts and resources, we can accomplish more together than we ever could alone.

We work together to send missionaries and support missions causes, both Baptist and ecumenical, which meet human need while sharing the love and Good News of Jesus Christ. All of us are called to be co-laborers in the task of fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission. We want to enable believers and churches to work cooperatively with other Great Commission Christians to activate this global missions calling in their communities and throughout the world.

We believe the Bible teaches that. . .

- *God is the one triune God, Creator of all people in God's own image.
- *All people are separated from God by sin.
- *Christ is the Savior and Redeemer for all peoples.
- *The Holy Spirit convicts and converts all who believe in Christ, teaches the church in the voice of the Living Christ, and empowers the church and all believers for the mission of Christ in the world.
- *Christ calls us to minister redemptively to the spiritual, physical and social needs of individuals and communities.
- *Every believer and every church is responsible for sharing the Gospel with all people.

Instead of owning and controlling institutions, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship seeks to discover other organizations that can provide resources for congregations and partner with them in mutually beneficial ways. This partnership model includes support of identity partners, independent agencies and institutions, which we believe to be working to preserve and promote Baptist principles. These partners include:

- *Baptist World Alliance (www.bwanet.org)
- *Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (www.bjcra.org)
- *Baptist Center for Ethics (www.ethicsdaily.com)
- *Christian Churches Together (www.christianchurchestogether.org)
- *Bread for the World (www.bread.org)
- *Associated Baptist Press (www.abpnews.com)
- **Baptists Today* (www.baptiststoday.org)

5 Much of the material for this section is taken from the website for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: www.thefellowship.info.

The partnership model also goes hand in hand with CBF's commitment to lifelong learning for laity and clergy. We are committed to Baptist theological education that affords intellectual and spiritual freedom to both students and professors in an atmosphere of reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship. We cooperate to provide theological education through support of independent colleges, universities, seminaries and divinity schools, in order to prepare Baptist leaders for service in our churches and the world. These schools include:

- *Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
- *Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, VA
- *Baptist University of the Americas, San Antonio, TX
- *Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Forth Worth, TX
- *Campbell University Divinity School, Buies Creek, NC
- *Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Atlanta, GA
- *Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee, KS
- *Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC
- *George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX
- *International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic
- *Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin Simmons University, Abilene, TX
- *Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC
- *M. Christopher White School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC
- *McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- *Wake Forest University Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC

Part 3: Why A Fellowship?

Out of our shared Baptist principles and our united efforts, our fellowship grows. The word “fellowship” is one translation of the Greek word *koinonia* (also translated community), which indicates an affection for one another. We are kindred spirits who work together to accomplish our shared purposes, but ours is not a business partnership. It is less of a contract and more of a covenant. It is not coerced and few restrictions apply: We ask only that those in the Fellowship be “Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.”⁶

This association is voluntary. Churches and individuals may participate at whatever level of involvement they choose and are free to partner with whatever other institutions and organizations they choose.

But how are we different from other denominations or conventions? Although we realize that more and more moderate Baptists claim CBF as their primary denominational identity, we have resisted traditional denominational structures with all their trappings. As mentioned in the previous section, we do not own schools or buildings or institutions. We do not require binding commitments to any organizational documents or positions. And we attempt to avoid much of the bureaucracy and control of more institutionalized denominations. Ours is a grass-roots movement of Baptists, guided by a group of elected leaders and supported by individuals and churches from across the country. Our leadership and membership are as diverse as Baptists themselves: moderate and conservative, lay and clergy, male and female, urban and rural, liturgical and contemporary, representing a variety of races, regions and theological persuasions. We seek to partner with any Great Commission Christians who affirm the Lordship of Christ and the Baptist principles upon which we are built.

But with freedom and diversity come certain risks. We celebrate that our diversity often creates differences of opinion and practice. We encourage these many voices to contribute to decisions that are made and to the vision of our movement. While this model may not be as efficient as others, we believe it affirms our Baptist ideals of freedom and reflects the rich diversity of the larger Body of Christ.

6 Quoted from Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s Identity Statement

Lesson 1: What Do the Words Mean?

Focal Scriptures:

Colossians 3:12-17; Mark 1:16-20; Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

****Why are you Baptist? Because your parents are? Because it's the closest church to your house? Because your church has the coolest youth group in town? All of these may be legitimate reasons that you are part of a Baptist church, but what defines the Baptist movement is much more. Discuss what defines what it means to be Baptist and what distinguishes us from other Christian denominations.**

****Have the youth investigate the websites for the CBF identity partners. A list of these websites is included with the background materials for this lesson. If internet access is not available, request brochures or newsletters from these organizations for the youth to examine. If you have a large group, break them up into smaller groups to research the various partners. Based on what they find, have youth report on the mission statements, values and core beliefs of these various groups. How do these organizations reflect the mission and values of CBF?**

****Discuss how a fellowship is different from a convention or denomination. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? How does the fellowship model reflect our Baptist principles?**

****Read Colossians 3:12-17. What does the passage say to us about the importance of cooperation and fellowship? What does Paul say are the things that bind a fellowship together? Why were these things important for the early church? Why are they important for us?**

****For the following activity, you will need a ball of yarn or spool of sturdy string and a ball (such as a kickball or light-weight child's ball).**

Have the youth form a circle in a large, open space. This activity works best with at least six people. The more people you have, the better the visual demonstration; however, if you have more than 25-30 people, you may want to break them up into smaller groups.

Hold the end of the yarn and toss the ball to someone else in the circle but not the person next to you. Have each person hold onto the yarn and throw the ball to someone else until everyone has received the yarn and a "web" is formed. Ask the youth what it looks like—a web, a net? Why is it important to cooperate? What would happen if we tried to balance the ball on a single strand of yarn? How much weight could one strand hold? Throw the ball onto the web of yarn. Try to roll or bounce the ball around. What happens?

When we are all connected by the yarn, it forms a network, a safety net of cooperation. It can hold the ball and support much more weight. The more people in the circle, the more tightly we are woven together and the more effective we can be. How does this demonstration relate to CBF's ideas about partnership and cooperation? How does our working together make us stronger and more effective? Can you think of other symbols that represent cooperation?

****Read Mark 1:16-20. How is the symbol of a net important in this story? How does it relate to CBF's understanding of partnership? Of missions? In what ways are we, like the disciples, called to leave our way of life and follow Christ?**

Closing Prayer:

God, we thank you for the community of faith with which we pray: for the differences among us by which we are enriched and through which the Spirit prompts us to grow; your amazing grace that forgives and restores us; new insights from ancient, holy words; traditions of the church that still give us meaning today; hymns and prayers that pour out of our hearts into yours; Christian friends who perceive our strengths when we cannot; words of encouragement, affection and trust; shared laughter, healing of wounds, and hope shining in the darkness. For all these things, we give you our deepest gratitude. Amen.⁷

⁷ Sharlande Sledge. *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing. 1999. p. 98.

Resource Pages - Lesson 1

CBF 101: An Introduction to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

By Larry Hovis, Executive Coordinator, *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina*

In college courses, “101” usually refers to basic, foundational, or introductory subject matter. In these days of great change in Baptist life, many members of Baptist churches are seeking to learn more about Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). The purpose of this document is to help with this educational process.

Background

Beginning in 1979, a concerted effort was undertaken to bring about a drastic change in the leadership and direction of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This effort was accomplished through a well-organized political process that involved electing a convention president who would make appointments that eventually resulted in placing persons on boards of trustees of agencies and institutions who would carry out the desired changes. Control of boards of trustees was accomplished in about twelve years, along with replacing the administrations, and eventually, most employees of the agencies and institutions. Great attention was given to altering the character and culture of the seminaries and mission boards. Those who supported these changes labeled this process, “The Conservative Resurgence.” Those who opposed these changes referred to the process as, “The Fundamentalist Takeover.” Regardless of one’s approval or disapproval of the changes, all agreed that by 1991, the SBC had undergone a major transformation.

That year, a group gathered in Atlanta representing active Southern Baptists who were displeased with the new direction of the SBC. This group formed a new body which was incorporated under Georgia law as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The focus of CBF in those early days was to provide a place of fellowship for people who felt disenfranchised from the SBC and a funding channel for missionaries and new theological schools that were beginning to be birthed.

Today, CBF has grown far beyond its humble beginnings. Though many of the churches and individuals who partner together through CBF still have a connection to the SBC, CBF is recognized as a separate body, as evidenced by its recent admission as a member of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), an organization of over two hundred international Baptist bodies. (The SBC has subsequently withdrawn from the BWA.)

Baptist Principles: A Firm Foundation

CBF adherents have always placed a high premium on what are commonly referred to as “historic Baptist principles.” In fact, disagreement over the interpretation of these principles, and how they are applied in local churches and in denominational life, has been at the heart of the controversy in the SBC. CBF’s understanding of basic Christian and Baptist principles are reflected in its official documents and strategic plan.

- Our Identity – “We are a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.”
- Our Vision – “Being the presence of Christ in the world.”
- Our Mission – “Serving Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission.”
- Our Core Values
 - Baptist Principles
 - Soul Freedom – We believe in the priesthood of all believers and the equality of every church member.
 - Bible Freedom – We believe in the authority of Scripture under the Lordship of Christ without the imposition of creedal statements.
 - Church Freedom – We believe in the autonomy of every local church and affirm every church’s right to determine its faith, practice and leadership without outside interference.
 - Religious Freedom – We believe in full religious liberty and the separation of church and state.
 - Biblically-based Global missions – This includes belief in the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); the sinfulness of all humankind; Christ as Savior and Redeemer for all peoples; the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and empower believers; the responsibility of every believer and church to share the Gospel; the need to cooperate with others in mission to the world.
 - Resource Model
 - Justice and Reconciliation

- Lifelong Learning and Ministry
- Trustworthiness
- Effectiveness

CBF Ministries

Current CBF ministries fall into four areas or “strategic initiatives”:

- Faith Formation – Assisting congregations with evangelism, outreach and spiritual growth.
- Building Community – Encouraging congregational health, Baptist identity, reconciliation and justice, marriage and family ministries, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and endorsing chaplains and pastoral counselors.
- Leadership Development – In congregations, through theological education (in partnership with seminaries and divinity schools) and in collegiate ministry.
- Global Missions and Ministries – Through partnership missions with local churches, reaching the most neglected peoples of the world and planting new churches (over one-half of our resources are spent on Global Missions and Ministries).

A Paradigm Shift: From Convention to Partnership

Most lifelong Southern Baptist adults were nurtured in a “convention culture” in which congregations, district associations, state conventions and the national convention were closely connected through money (which flowed from congregations to associations and state conventions to the national convention) and programs (which flowed from the national convention to state conventions and associations to congregations). Theoretically, we exercised autonomy at every level, but in practice, we functioned as an organizational pyramid with congregations forming the base and the national convention sitting at the apex.

Alternatively, CBF promotes a “partnership paradigm” in which congregations are at the center of Baptist life. Congregations are encouraged to determine their unique, God-given mission and then choose partners to assist them in accomplishing that mission. CBF does not demand exclusive loyalty but humbly asks for the opportunity to be one (hopefully a significant one) of a congregation’s many missional partners.

The CBF Movement: National and State Fellowships

In addition to CBF, which has its offices in Atlanta, there are eighteen autonomous state and regional CBF-related bodies. These bodies work very closely with CBF but are not franchises or field offices. CBF Executive Coordinator Daniel Vestal calls this unique relationship between national and state CBF bodies “a seamless movement.”

CBF of North Carolina (CBFNC) is funded and organized separately from CBF. We seek to be the face of CBF in North Carolina by promoting CBF ministries in our state. We also have our own ministries which include multiple mission projects; support for theological education; retreats for youth, children and adults; and a reference and referral service to help churches seeking staff and ministers seeking ministry placement find each other. We extend the partnership paradigm in North Carolina by offering a *Mission Resource Plan* which allows churches to support historic North Carolina Baptist ministries through CBFNC. We have our own paid staff, elected leadership, annual general assembly, and many events throughout the year. Our mission is “Bringing Baptists of North Carolina together for Christ-centered ministry.”

Getting Connected

CBF, at both the state and national levels, is not a member organization, but a fellowship of churches and individuals who voluntarily cooperate to do together what we could never accomplish alone, for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Please attend one of our assemblies, participate in one of our ministries, or call on one of our staff members or volunteer leaders for information or assistance. If you embrace our mission, vision and values, and desire to share in our ministries, you are welcome in our fellowship. Of course, your financial gifts are most welcome, too. May God bless and guide us as we seek to be the presence of Christ in the world, together.

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Lesson 2: Sweet Freedom

Freedom is important for life and faith. Inherent in the concept of freedom is an affirmation of human dignity. It implies empowerment and self-determination, a recognition that human beings are capable of being trustworthy to think and make decisions for themselves. While our Christian faith teaches us that we all have the capacity for great sin and evil, we also believe that we, each and all, are created in God's image and are unique and gifted and loved by God.

God's gift of freedom to us is an expression of God's great love for us. The Protestant Reformers believed strongly that matters of faith were matters of individual conscience and could not be forced or coerced either by church or civil authorities. In his book *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, Walter Shurden has said, "[Jesus] invited personal response based on voluntary commitment."¹ From the beginning, Baptists have embraced the freedoms granted by God and defended those freedoms for others.

In Lesson 1, we discussed the Baptist principles upon which the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was built. Each of these principles affirms the freedoms that we cherish for ourselves, our churches and others. Three of these principles have to do with how we relate to God and to one another within the church:

*Soul Freedom - We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We affirm the freedom and responsibility of every person to relate directly to God without the imposition of creed or the control of clergy or government.

*Bible Freedom - We believe in the authority of Scripture. We believe the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, is central to the life of the individual and the church. We affirm the freedom and right of every Christian to interpret and apply scripture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

*Church Freedom - We believe in the autonomy of every local church. We believe Baptist churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate as they deem appropriate in the larger Body of Christ.

Freedom to Be God's Child

Central to our understanding of faith is our belief that as children of God, we are free to relate to and talk to God, to worship and to live out our faith as we believe God has called us to do. We call that freedom the priesthood of all believers. This doctrine, as understood by Martin Luther² and other Protestant reformers, teaches that individuals do not need a human mediator, such as clergy or creed, in order to pray, confess, worship or serve. We can each relate to God as we are led by the Holy Spirit to do. This belief emphasizes that each soul is competent to stand before God, to bring its petitions to God and to receive God's grace.

While some churches require confession and certain prayers or other acts of worship to be done through a priest or other clergy, and then for those clergy to impose a certain penance in order for the person to be restored to a right relationship with the church and with God, Baptists believe that Christ is the only mediator we need and that we pray directly to him and through him in order to relate to God. While most Baptist churches understand that it is important to have educated, trained clergy in order to provide worship and organizational leadership, pastoral care and guidance for the congregation, we do not hold that ordained clergy necessarily have any more special relationship with God than anyone else. While clergy have been called out by God for specific ministries, each baptized Christian is a minister with the same freedoms and responsibilities to God and the Church.

The belief that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ goes hand in hand with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. We believe that it is not through a particular intervention of the Church or clergy that we are saved. Nor is our salvation secured by any works or good deeds that we might do. While Baptists and other Protestants affirm the importance of the Church for living out the life of faith in community and the central role that good works play in the demonstration of our faith, we believe that our salvation is secured only by the redemptive work of Christ on our behalf. We are reconciled to God by placing our faith in the Christ who came as the incarnation of God's grace for us.

1 Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993, 25.

2 Martin Luther. *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520).

Freedom to Read God's Word

Related to our belief in soul freedom is our belief in Bible freedom. Baptists have long taught that individuals have the right and responsibility to read and interpret Scripture for themselves. Baptists typically hold a high view of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, the written account of God's activity in human history. Our Bible includes both the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament (writings of the early Church), and both are used in the context of worship and Bible study. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and within the context of a faith community that will hold them accountable, each Christian is given the freedom to read God's word, to interpret its meaning, and to apply it to their life of faith.

Associated with an understanding of soul freedom and Bible freedom is an emphasis on non-creedalism. The word creed comes from the Latin word "credo," meaning "I believe." Creeds were first developed by the church councils, where leaders such as bishops and cardinals met in the early years of the Church to make decisions about the teachings and practices of the Church. Creeds were used to summarize the accepted beliefs of the Church and to denounce heresies (false teachings) that arose. For centuries, creeds such as the Nicene Creed and Apostle's Creed helped to influence the direction of the teachings of the Church. They were also helpful in a time when printed versions of the Bible were rare and few people were literate because they could be easily memorized and recited in worship.

During the Middle Ages, corruption within church leadership caused some to begin to use the creeds to oppress and persecute people who disagreed with them. During these times, there was little or no concept of religious freedom. Most governments supported an official church with which everyone in the country was required to identify, and many clergy had great power to decide whether someone's faith practices were acceptable or not. Some of those in leadership feared that new ideas and interpretations of Scripture would threaten their power to control the thought and practice of the Church. In some instances, people were even tortured or burned at the stake for refusing to affirm a certain creed. Especially after the invention of the print press, around the year 1450, the Bible became much more accessible, and more people were able to read and interpret Scripture for themselves. During the early years of the Protestant Reformation, Baptists were among those who rejected the use of creeds for forcing people to prove their orthodoxy (right belief). Baptist Reformers said that our only creed should be the Bible itself, believing that a creed was only someone else's interpretation of what is contained in Scripture. Baptists thought that each Christian should be able to follow their own conscience in interpreting Scripture, even if that meant differences of opinion, without the imposition of creeds by the Church hierarchy.

In his book *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, Walter Shurden has said, "Historically, Baptists have resisted any and all creeds. And they have for two very good reasons. First, no one doctrinal statement can summarize adequately the biblical mandate for behavior and belief. It is better, therefore, to stay with the Bible alone. Second, Baptists have feared creeds because of the seemingly inevitable tendency to make the creed the *norm* and to *force* compliance to the creed."³

Some Baptist congregations choose to use one of the more widely accepted creeds as an affirmation of faith (especially the Apostle's Creed), and some groups have written their own affirmations. An affirmation of faith, sometimes called a confession, allows us to state the tenants of our faith succinctly but is not binding. No one is required to swear allegiance to or sign a certain creed for participation in the church, and a variety of affirmations of faith may be used to verbalize what we believe, to unite us in worship as a community of faith, and to witness to others of our faith in Christ.

Freedom to Be the Church

Another component of freedom for Baptists is church freedom. Baptists practice a congregational polity (church governance), which says that each local congregation is an autonomous body of voluntarily affiliated members. Each congregation can decide for itself, most often by a democratic process, issues such as how it will organize, whom it will ordain for ministry and place in leadership, what its worship style will be, what doctrinal or social positions it will take, in what missions and ministries it will participate, with whom it will affiliate and any number of other decisions that are made

3 Shurden, 14.

within the church.

Local church autonomy means that some Baptist churches will have contemporary worship, some will have traditional Baptist worship and others will choose liturgical worship. It means that some congregations will have women as deacons or ministers and others will not. It means that each church can decide by what method it will elect deacons, officers and committees. It means that one congregation may affiliate with a local association, a state convention, a national organization, any combination of these or none at all. The belief in and practice of local church autonomy affirms that if each individual Christian is competent to relate to God as he or she is led by the Holy Spirit, then any given community of such believers is also competent to make these decisions.

Each individual or congregation affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship does so voluntarily and may or may not choose to affiliate with our other partner organizations. Association with CBF does not require any doctrinal allegiance other than affirmation of the Lordship of Christ or any particular denominational affiliation other than identification as a Baptist Christian.

Risky Business

Some may read about these freedoms and react with alarm or fear. Surely giving people this much freedom and allowing for this much difference is risky! Indeed, it is, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship believes it is worth the risk. God loves us enough to grant us this kind of freedom because the inherent worth and dignity of each person created in God's image requires it. God gives us this freedom because God understands that faith or devotion that is coerced is not sincere but that faith in Christ is best lived out without externally imposed restraints but through personal conviction and commitment. In order for faith to be genuine it must be free to be experienced, explored and practiced by the individual as he or she responds to the call of God and the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 2: Sweet Freedom

Focal Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 1:4b-6; Galatians 5:1, 13

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

*Have youth take turns reading the Focal Scriptures from 1 Peter, Revelation and Galatians. What do they have to say about freedom? About responsibility? How are the two related? Does freedom mean that anything goes? Why do Baptists believe that freedom is so important?

*Have someone read the passage from Ephesians. What does this passage say about the nature of our fellowship within the church? What does it say about unity and diversity within the Christian community? Why do you think God calls people with many different gifts together? What are the opportunities and the challenges created by these differences?

*Creeds and Affirmations:

1. Give each youth a copy of the Apostle's Creed and Nicene Creed found on page 18. How are they similar? Different? Does anyone in the class have either of these memorized. If so, does the version you know differ from the one printed here?
2. Why were the creeds important to the early Church? Why might church leaders be tempted to use devices such as creeds to punish people with different opinions? Can you think of other examples from history or today where religion has been used to control people's thoughts and opinions?
3. Does your church use any kind of confession or affirmation of faith in worship? What other parts of worship and church life might serve as a creed, stating what we believe? Hymns? Prayers? Actions?

*Have each youth write their own Credo or Affirmation of Faith. Encourage them to be as concise as possible. It may help to give them a limit, such as five sentences or fewer, so that they have to consider the points of their faith that are most significant for them. Give the group a few minutes to write down their ideas or have them prepare this ahead of time to bring with them. Have those who are willing read theirs to the group. Are they struck by how similar or how different they are? How would they feel if they were forced to declare allegiance to someone else's beliefs?

*For high school youth or young adults: A discussion of theories of justification will be a bit too much for most youth, but you can have older youth discuss what some passages of Scripture say about salvation. Have the youth read Romans 3:21-24, Galatians 2:16, and James 2:14-16. What does it mean that we are saved by grace and not works? What is the role of good works in our life of faith?

*Schedule a movie night for your group to watch *Wide Awake* (1998, starring Denis Leary, Dana Delaney, Joseph Cross and Rosie O'Donnell. You can find it inexpensively online.) *You can consult www.kids-in-mind.com or www.screenit.com to check content for this and many other movies.* *Wide Awake* is the story of a boy named Josh who embarks on a year-long journey of looking for God. It is a good movie with serious theological considerations for youth as well as plenty of humorous moments. His questions and experiences may provide good materials for discussion about our having the freedom to discover faith for ourselves and how we receive and discern God's revelation.

*This discussion about freedom may also lead your group to a further discussion about the responsibilities that accompany that freedom. While we will take up some of these issues in Session 4 when we discuss missions, if questions arise here, it might be appropriate to pursue them while there is interest. A movie suggestion that may be helpful in exploring these issues of individual responsibility and how one person's willingness to stand up for what they believe in can make a difference is *Amazing Grace* (2006), based on the true story of William Wilberforce (Ioan Gruffudd) who embarks on a courageous quest to end the British slave trade.

Closing Prayer:

Ever-present God, stir in our hearts a holy expectancy so that we will be ready and open to hear your voice. May our spirit be open to the calling of your Spirit, that in listening for you we might hear you, that in waiting for you we might meet you, that in meeting you we might follow you. Amen.⁴

⁴ Peggy Haymes. *Be Thou Present: Prayers, Litanies, and Hymns for Christian Worship*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing. 1994. pp. 10-11.

Resource Pages

Lesson 2

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into Hell; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Lesson 3: Free to Be

Picture this: You and your family are attending worship one Sunday morning. As the service ends and people start to file out of the sanctuary, you hear a commotion outside. As you exit, you can see men in uniforms carrying guns. They are yelling questions and insults, intimidating the worshipers, members of your church family whom you have known all your life. As the church members try to answer the questions, the soldiers begin to handcuff them and take them to jail, without any explanation, without any information. In the days to come, other church members have trouble conducting business. Neighbors won't be seen talking to them. Their children are excluded at school. Church members find themselves ignored, discriminated against, shunned throughout the community.

Sound far-fetched? Hard to believe? For those of us who live in a country where we enjoy complete freedom to believe and to worship however we choose, a scene like this is almost impossible to fathom. But in many parts of the world, Christians regularly face these kinds of challenges, being harassed and persecuted simply for worshiping, carrying a Bible, praying, or expressing their faith in any way. Religious liberty is something we take for granted. It is something that many people in the world continue to fight for and to long for.

As Baptists we celebrate our own freedom to believe, worship, study, fellowship and govern ourselves as we are led by the Holy Spirit to do, but another important part of that freedom is honoring and protecting those same freedoms for others. The 19th-century British philosopher Herbert Spencer said, "No one can be perfectly free till all are free."¹ Historically, our understanding of this kind of freedom as it applies to religion has had two emphases:

1. Religious Liberty:

Every human being has the right to follow his or her own conscience in matters of religion. What you believe and how you choose to put that faith into practice is not something that can be coerced by any church or government authority, by any group or individual. Baptists have long held that religious liberty is a precious gift, something to be preserved and protected for all. And we have long understood that as long as there is anyone whose religious liberty is denied or threatened, ours may also be in jeopardy. Such liberty is not only for those who are in the majority or those who agree with the prevailing opinions. In order for it to be secure for any of us, the freedom to believe and worship as we choose, as well as the freedom not to believe or worship at all, must be defended for everyone.

And when Baptists talk about freedom, we mean complete freedom. Walter Shurden writes, "Freedom of religion represents a commitment to complete religious liberty and not simply religious toleration. Religious liberty and religious toleration are not the same. Religious toleration is concession; religious liberty is a right. Religious toleration is a measure of expediency; religious liberty is a matter of principle."²

As we learned in Lesson 1, the first Baptists sought freedom from persecution in England by fleeing to Amsterdam, where religious diversity was tolerated. Baptists also helped to establish religious liberty in the New World. In 1636, Roger Williams, an English Separatist, helped to establish a settlement at Providence, which would later become part of the colony of Rhode Island. Williams was led by the principle that "God requireth not an uniformity of religion" and made certain that all people and religious groups would enjoy what he called "soul liberty."³ Williams was one of about a dozen people who helped to found the first Baptist church in the New World in 1639, and when he became governor of Rhode Island, he insisted that the colony's charter guarantee, for the first time in American history, complete religious liberty for all who would settle there.

1 Herbert Spencer. *Social Statics*, part IV, chapter 30.

2 Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993, 49.

3 *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, Edited by Bill J. Leonard. InterVarsity Press, 1994, p. 289.

2. Separation of Church and State:

Another principle that has been championed by Baptists and that has helped to describe what we believe to be the appropriate relationship to government is called separation of church and state. U.S. founders Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and Baptist leaders like John Leland worked to establish protection for religious liberty in this young nation. Baptists were among those who insisted that our nation's Constitution include a Bill of Rights which would enumerate those rights believed to be given by God and protected by law, including freedom of religion. Despite its frequent usage in modern dialogue, the phrase from Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, "a wall of separation between church and state," appears nowhere in the official documents of our country's founding. What we do find is the First Amendment to the Constitution which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" Later was added the Fourteenth Amendment, extending this requirement to all state governments. Disagreement over the interpretation of this Constitutional provision continues to this day.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship identifies religious liberty and separation of church and state among its core values. Its partnership with Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty has been important for CBF since its beginnings. The mission of the Baptist Joint Committee is "to defend and extend God-given religious liberty for all, furthering the Baptist heritage that champions the principle that religion must be freely exercised, neither advanced nor inhibited by government."⁴ To learn more about the work of Baptist Joint Committee, visit its website at www.bjconline.org.

4 Quoted from the website of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, www.bjconline.org.

Lesson 3: Free to Be

Focal Scriptures:

John 8:31-32; Matthew 22:15-22

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

*Discuss the quote about freedom by Herbert Spencer. Do you agree or disagree with his statement?

*Why is it important for us to support religious freedom, even when it may mean supporting someone's right to do or believe something with which we disagree?

*Do you agree with Walter Shurden that religious liberty and religious toleration are not the same? How are they different? Why is religious toleration not enough?

*Bring with you or have the youth research, from the internet, magazines and newspapers, articles about religious liberty issues. Look especially for stories about religious persecution around the world, Supreme Court decisions dealing with religious issues; any kind of government influence or interference in religion. Have the youth read and discuss these articles. Some recent events or issues you may wish to discuss include the FLDS charges of polygamy and child abuse; Muslim restrictions on women (requirement to wear head coverings, honor killings, etc.); prayer in public schools; government funding of faith-based charities; references to God in the pledge of allegiance and on currency. You may want to check the website for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty for the most recent issues and court cases.

*What are some of the negative results of a lack of or limitations on religious freedom? How can a lack of religious liberty lead to oppression or abuses in other areas of life? Political, social, economic, etc? Should there be any limits on religious liberty? If so, what?

*Would religious liberty mean more to you if you were a member of a minority religion in the U.S. or a Christian in a non-Christian nation? You may consider having someone who practices a minority religion come to talk with your group about their appreciation of religious liberty.

*Discuss the importance of the four freedoms named in the Baptist principles. Why have these been important for Baptist history? What has this history contributed to ideas about religion in our nation and world? How do you see these freedoms at work in your own congregation?

*The following activity will more easily be done in a larger open space.

Ask for at least four volunteers. The rest of your group will serve as observers and reporters. On each volunteer, place some physical limitation: blindfold one person, bind the feet of one person and the hands of another, etc. Have one additional volunteer on which you place no limitations. Ask each volunteer to complete a simple task such as stacking books or placing small items in a box or basket. Depending on the space available, you could have them do this simultaneously or take turns.

Ask the rest of the group to observe the volunteers and to discuss how their performance of the task was affected by the limitations placed on them. The person who is completely free to move around should be able to complete the task easily. The others will experience varying degrees of difficulty depending on the limitation imposed.

How is this exercise a metaphor for the importance of religious freedom? How might the practice of your faith be affected if you were not free to follow your conscience and to believe and practice as you choose?

*Read and discuss the focal Scriptures.

Consider Matthew 22:15-22. How did Jesus understand the proper relationship between religion and government? As a follower of Jesus, what is your responsibility to participate in the larger society?

Look at John 8:31-32. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “the truth will set you free”? Are there different types of freedom? If so, what? What type was Jesus talking about? Why do you think Jesus placed such a high value on freedom?

Closing Prayer:

God of all creation and Lord of all life, you have created each of us to be unique and special yet all in your image, and you have breathed into us your life-giving Spirit. May your Spirit blow among us now as a wind of change, that we may love and respect all of your children, regardless of our differences, and that we may seek peace and reconciliation in a world so determined to promote hatred and division. Transform our hearts and minds, that in all things we might seek your righteousness. In the name of the One who revealed your righteousness to us, even Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Lesson 4: Go Into All the World

On June 17, 1812, Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Calcutta, India. At the age of 25, he had been commissioned as the first Protestant missionary sent from North America. The Judsons were originally commissioned by the Congregational Church, but during their voyage, after a detailed study of Matthew 28:19-20, they became convinced that believer's baptism was theologically valid and should be practiced in obedience to the command of Jesus. After arriving in India, the Judsons were baptized by immersion and affiliated with the American Baptist Missionary Union and then began what would be a nearly forty-year career in Burma (now called Myanmar). Thus began the long and storied development of the movement of Baptist missionaries from North America into all the world. Over the next two centuries, tens of thousands of missionaries and hundreds of millions of dollars would be sent into every corner of the globe in order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Missions has always been at the heartbeat of what it means to be Baptist. And missions has been central to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship movement from its beginnings. Field personnel and volunteers, individuals and congregations work together to share the love of Christ and help CBF to fulfill its mission: to serve Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given purpose.

Biblically-based Global Missions

All of us are called to be co-laborers in the task of fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission. We believe the Bible teaches that:

- *God is the one triune God, Creator of all people in God's own image
- *All people are separated from God by sin
- *Christ is the Savior and Redeemer for all peoples
- *The Holy Spirit convicts and converts all who believe in Christ, teaches the church in the voice of the Living Christ, and empowers the church and all believers in the mission of Christ in the world.
- *Christ calls us to minister redemptively to the spiritual, physical and social needs of individuals and communities
- *Every believer and every church is responsible for sharing the Gospel with all people. We want to enable believers and churches to work cooperatively with other Great Commission Christians to activate this global missions calling in their communities and throughout the world.¹

As CBF Baptists, we proudly claim the name of Great Commission Christians (Matthew 28:18-20). We are on mission because God is on mission and has invited us to participate in that work. We also believe that in our work, we are called to live out the Great Commandment (Mark 12:29-31). Jesus said that the most important things we can do in our life of faith is to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. God's mission, and therefore our mission as God's children, is redemption and reconciliation for all people and ultimately for all of creation. The Good News that we share is that God in Christ offers compassion for the here and now and hope for eternal life.

CBF missions seeks to demonstrate the Incarnation of Christ (Christ's coming in human flesh). The Incarnation is witness to God's great love for us. Scripture is clear that, like Christ, we are both body and spirit. Whether we say we are embodied spirits or spirit-filled bodies, we cannot separate the two. At creation, God formed us from dust in God's own image and enlivened us with the breath of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 2:7). In our redemption, the Word of God became human flesh in order to save us (John 1:1-9), and when Christ returns we will be like him (1 John 3:1-2). That means for us that if we are to participate fully in God's mission of loving and redeeming humanity, we are called to nurture both the body and the spirit.

So, our mission is not just about meeting people's physical needs and it is not just about sharing the message that if we confess our sins and profess Christ as Lord we will be saved – it is both, and the two cannot be separated!

¹ From CBF's statement "Who Are We: What Fellowship People Do."

CBF uses the name “Global Missions” in order to indicate that our work is worldwide. As our world has become increasingly interdependent and people of all languages, cultures and colors can now be found living around the world, we no longer think of missions as being divided into categories of work we do at home and abroad. Through our mission efforts we seek to embrace the world and cross all kinds of borders of nation, language and tradition. CBF missions seeks to participate in God’s mission through several means:

- *Serving the most neglected and unreached people groups with short-term and long-term field personnel
- *Recognizing a world without borders where we do not work only within national political borders but minister to people groups wherever they live
- *Partnering with other Great Commission Christians in our missions efforts (See our list of partners in Lesson 1.)
- *Working to promote the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) of addressing extreme hunger and poverty issues around the world.²

Our missions initiatives include:³

- *Together for Hope, the Fellowship’s rural poverty initiative
- *New Church Starts
- *Disaster Response in the United States and around the world
- *Communities of Missional Practice where groups of Christians and/or churches who share a passion for a particular area of ministry meet together to discuss and share ideas. Some of the communities related to CBF are: Poverty/Transformation Ministries; Disaster Response Ministry; Internationals Ministries; Church Starting/Faith Sharing; Justice and Peacemaking Ministries; Medical Ministries; Education/Economic Development Ministries.

CBF Global Missions partners with churches and others in sharing the love of Jesus Christ to the most neglected, unevangelized and marginalized peoples in a world without borders.

² See www.un.org/millenniumgoals and www.micahchallenge.org for more information. These can also be found at www.thefellowship.info/mdg.

³ See www.thefellowship.info/Missions for information about these and other CBF missions efforts.

Lesson 4: Go Into All the World

Focal Scriptures:

Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 12:29-31

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

**Read the focal Scripture passages of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. How are the two related? How do they inform and affect one another?

**As Christians, how do we understand our responsibility and motivation to go into all the world? How would you define God's mission in the world? How do you think you are called to participate in that mission?

**Prepare a printout or poster listing the MDG's. Why do you think the United Nations as well as many communities of faith, including CBF, have endorsed these goals? How do these goals relate to your understanding of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment? What can you do to make progress toward meeting these goals?

**Choose one or more secular songs that address our responsibilities to care for one another and play them for the group.

Also consider having a printout of the lyrics that the group might follow along. Some suggestions are "Hands" by Jewel; "Waiting On the World to Change" by John Mayer; "Hammer and a Nail" by Indigo Girls; "There's a Hole In the World Tonight" by the Eagles; "Another Day In Paradise" by Phil Collins.

For the song(s), what does it say about our responsibility to one another? What does it say about the impact or effect that we can have in the world and/or for one another? How does the message of the song differ from those of the Focal Scriptures? How are they similar? How might the messages of secular music be used to share messages that are also important to people of faith?

**Have participants plan and carry out a hands-on local mission project.

Perhaps have them consider one or more of the MDG's that their project might help to address. They may need to enlist the help of parents or other adults in the congregation. In preparation for this, you may have them first investigate various agencies and ministries in your area. Find out contact information, purposes and goals of the organization, population served by them, and their needs for volunteers, donations, etc. This investigation will allow them to prepare for their project while also learning more about the needs and the ministries in your community. Schedule a time to carry out the project.

After they have completed the project, plan a time of "debriefing" so that the group can reflect on the experience, what they learned, how the work that they did connects with their faith, and how the ministry helps to fulfill the Great Commission and/or the Great Commandment.

Be sure to take pictures or video of your group involved in the project. Consider finding a time for the youth to report on their project within the congregation, perhaps for a Sunday School class, Mission group, or at a fellowship meal. Have some of the youth speak, share pictures and/or video of their work, etc. Be sure that they focus not only on what they did but also on what they learned and how it affected them and those they served.

**Hold a Hunger Simulation dinner for your group. This activity can be most effective if the participants do not know ahead of time what is going to happen. Consider sending them an invitation to a special dinner to be held in their honor but do not disclose details about the dinner. You will probably need several adults to assist, depending on your group size. One model for how to do this can be found on pages 26-28.

Closing Prayer:

Come into our waiting hearts, Holy God, as we seek you each day of our lives, that in seeking you we might find you, in finding you we might worship you, in worshipping we might give ourselves to you, and in giving ourselves, we might become your hands and feet and heart in this world that needs your love and grace. Mold us, we pray, in the image of your Son, Jesus the Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Resource Pages

Lesson 4

This model for a Hunger Simulation Dinner can work with relatively little preparation and for groups of varying sizes. As each youth enters the rooms, have them draw a number 1, 2 or 3. Instead of numbers, you may also use copies of the “money” found on the following pages. The two pages should be copied to make a two-sided page and then cut into “dollars.” The money represents how much the average person in those areas has to live on per day: \$50 in the First World (1), \$5 in the Second World (2), and \$1 in the Third World (3).

Make sure the vast majority of the numbers are 3’s or \$1’s. Depending on the size of your group, you will want about twenty percent 2’s and ten percent 1’s. For example, for a group of 20 youth, have two 1’s, four 2’s, and fourteen 3’s. Instruct the youth to sit at separate tables that are labeled for their groups, being sure to crowd the larger group of 3’s around as few tables as possible.

First bring out the First World meal. It should be a full meal such as a chicken dinner, or pizza dinner, with a side dish, dessert and choice of beverages. There should be slightly more food than they need for the meal. Have adults serve them, pay attention to them, offer seconds throughout the meal, etc., as though they are in a restaurant.

Once the first meal is served, bring out the Second World meal. It should consist of some kind of simple soup like vegetable or chicken noodle, bread and tea or water. There should be a generous portion for each person but no extra food. This group should be served their food but no further attention paid to them.

Finally, bring out the Third World meal. This group will be served small bowls of rice and a small cup of water with no ice. Consider bringing their food out on trays or a cart, placing it down for them and walking away.

Have the adults observe their reactions to the food they are offered and what they do and say as they eat. How do the First World people respond to having more than they need? Do they offer to share? Do those at the other tables ask for more food from them? Do you observe any resentment? Anger? Compassion? Confusion?

Youth should be instructed that food may not be taken by force or without permission. Any other questions or decisions about how the food is shared are to be left up to the participants. It is best that the adults observe and not interact or intervene with the youth. Once everyone has had a chance to eat, discuss the activity with them. What were the observations and feelings of each group? How did they react to being asked for food or having to ask someone else for food?

Talk to the participants about the significance of the amounts of money represented on their “dollars.” Ask them to imagine having to live on \$1 or \$5 per day. In the U.S., while many people live on less, the average person lives on about \$50 per day. This is about \$54,750 per year for a family three, which, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, is approximately the average family size in the U.S.¹ See the websites which discuss the Millennium Development Goals for more information about income in other areas of the world.

*Read Luke 12:48b. What do the words of Jesus mean for those of us to whom much has been given? What are our responsibilities to others?

1 www.factfinder.census.gov

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
\$1 \$1

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
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\$1 \$1
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\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
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\$5 \$5
FIVE DOLLARS
\$5 \$5

\$5 \$5
FIVE DOLLARS
\$5 \$5

\$50 \$50
FIFTY DOLLARS
\$50 \$50

Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

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Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

Most of Eastern Europe (former Soviet and
Eastern bloc countries), Turk states, China,
parts of Northern Africa and the Middle
East.

Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

The United States, Canada, Western Europe,
Japan, and a few small Middle Eastern states
(like Kuwait and Qatar),
Australia

Most of Eastern Europe (former Soviet and
Eastern bloc countries), Turk states, China,
parts of Northern Africa and the Middle
East.

Suggestions for Further Study

Baptist Distinctives and History

Books:

Bill Leonard. *Dictionary of Baptists in America*. InterVarsity Press, 1994.

H. Leon McBeth. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. B & H Academic, 1987.

Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993.
A study guide is also available.

R. Wayne Stacy. *A Baptist's Theology*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1999.

Other Resources:

Celebrate Freedom: A Baptist Distinctives Vacation Bible School. Smyth & Helwys Publishing.

Pamela R. Durso. *A Short History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Movement*. Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2006. (Other resources are available from the Baptist History and Heritage Society at www.baptisthistory.org).

We Are Baptists. Judson Press. Studies available for younger and older elementary, youth and adults.

Youth Ministry Resources

Daniel Bagby. *Beyond the Myths: The Journey to Adulthood*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2007.

Kenda Creasy Dean. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Upper Room Books, 1998.

Charles Hambrick and Joy Lawler. *To the Point - Religions: Encountering People of Other Faiths*. Abingdon Press, 1995.

Brent McDougal. *The River of the Soul: A Spirituality Guide for Christian Youth*. New Hope Publishers, 2001.

David F. White. *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach*. The Pilgrim Press, 2005.

Missions

Books:

Ray Bakke. *Theology as Big as the City*. InterVarsity Press, 1997

Ray Bakke. *The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World*. InterVarsity Press, 1987.

Stan Guthrie. *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century*. Paternoster, 2002.

Nile Harper. *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Toward Justice*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.

Doug Pagitt. *A Christianity Worth Believing: Hope-Filled, Open-Armed, Alive-and-Well Faith*. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Other Resources:

The Justice Mission: A Video-Enhanced Curriculum Reflecting the Heart of God for the Oppressed of the World.
Zondervan Publishing House, 2002.

Hand To Hand. A collection of over 150 mission project ideas compiled by CBF of NC.

Religious Liberty

Books:

C. Welton Gaddy. *Faith and Politics: What's a Christian To Do?* Peake Road, 1996.

Resources available from Baptist Joint Committee:

Citizens of Two Kingdoms: Lessons for Youth in Baptist History and Religious Liberty, 1996.

Freedom is Never Free. A video production of Baptist Joint Committee.

How We Got That Way: Baptists on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State.

An address by Walter B. Shurden delivered at the 1996 Religious Liberty Conference in Washington, D.C.

Our Challenge, Their Future: Securing Religious Liberty for Our Children and Grandchildren.

A video production of Baptist Joint Committee.

Religious Liberty Council Issue Guide: Advocating Religious Liberty in the Public Square.

Connecting in North Carolina

CBF of NC Partners:

CBF

Lay Ministries

WMU of NC

Baptist Men of NC

Higher Education

Campbell University

Chowan University

Gardner-Webb University

Mars Hill College

Meredith College

Wake Forest University

Wingate University

Theological Education

Campbell Divinity

Baptist House of Duke Divinity

Gardner-Webb Divinity

Wake Forest Divinity

Social Ministries

Baptist Children's Homes

Baptist Retirement Homes

NC Baptist Hospital School of Pastoral Care

New Churches

Identity Partners

Associated Baptist Press

Baptist Center for Ethics

Baptist Foundation of NC

Baptist Joint Committee

Baptist World Alliance

Baptists Today

Biblical Recorder

Initiatives Shaping the Future of CBFNC:

- Racial Reconciliation/Diversity
- College Ministry
- Evangelism
- Hispanic Ministry
- Foundational Beliefs
- Wealth and Poverty
- Reference and Referral
- Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors

Missions Initiatives:

- NC Missions Initiative - Addressing Poverty in Our Own Backyard
- Church Planting - Anglo and other, traditional and non
- Belize - Belize Baptist Association and the Baptist Bible School of Belize
- Ukraine - Village of Hope Foster Home in Kiev
- CBF Global Missions - through the Offering for Global Missions and support of individual field personnel
- Disaster Relief - in NC and the nation
- Many additional partners who receive monetary support through the CBFNC budget

Visit www.cbfnc.org for more information.

Events and Training from CBFNC:

- Annual General Assembly
- Fellowship on the Move Regional Tour
- Spiritual Formation Retreats
- Marriage and Singles Retreats
- Staff Ministers' Retreat
- Training Events for clergy and lay leaders
- Annual Youth Retreats to the beach, to ski and to missions sites
- Annual Choir Retreats for children and youth
- Children's Missions Days
- College missional experience and retreat
- Sunday School Literature Workshops



COOPERATIVE BAPTIST
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and



Free

Faithful

**A Curriculum for Sharing the
Story of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
with Youth and Young Adults**

Written by
Elizabeth Jones Edwards

Produced by
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina

Introduction

These materials have grown out of the recognition by the Ministry Councils and leadership of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina that we need to share the story and principles of the CBF movement with the young people in our churches. Helping youth to understand these historic Baptist principles and to become invested in the grass-roots, lay-shaped movement that is CBF is vital to the growth, and even the long-term survival, of both.

The series includes four lessons, but in most cases, it is recommended that they be used in six different sessions. Instructions for doing so are included in Lesson 1. The lessons begin with introductory and historical material that can be shared with the youth by whatever methods the leaders think appropriate for their group, depending on the ages and size of the group. Each lesson also includes Focal Scripture passages and a variety of Activities and Questions for Discussion. You will also find resource pages and supplemental materials that you may use for further study, should you choose. It is not intended that every group should do every activity. Instead, a variety of suggestions has been included so that you may choose those which will be most effective in your setting. Because the materials are designed for youth, the activities include several multi-media suggestions, including ideas for internet activities, discussions of song lyrics and movie nights.

While these lessons were written primarily with youth in mind, they may also be used for adult small groups or Sunday School classes that would like to learn more about CBF. While some adult groups may not wish to use all of the games and activities, you may find that some adults would enjoy the variety of learning experiences.

I would like to express special thanks to Dr. Pam Durso, Associate Executive Director of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, for consulting on several of the historical passages included here. I am also grateful to Linda Davis and Denise Bennett, the administrative staff at Lakeside Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, NC, for their assistance in proofreading these materials. Special thanks to Natalie Aho of CBF of North Carolina for formatting these lessons for download and to members of the Faith Development Council and CBF of NC staff for their support and their work as co-laborers in the CBF movement.

And I am grateful to the staff, congregation, and especially the youth of Lakeside Baptist Church who remind me every day what it means to be free and faithful Baptists.

Elizabeth J. Edwards
Associate Minister
Lakeside Baptist Church
Rocky Mount, NC
March 2009

Lesson 1: What Do the Words Mean?

*This Lesson is divided into three parts that may better be used as separate lessons. If your typical schedule allows for a 30-45 minute study, you should plan to do these three parts separately and choose from the “Activities and Questions for Discussion” those which best fit your time-frame and circumstances.

Part 1: Let’s Start in the Middle:

Our middle name is Baptist, but our historic Baptist identity is essential for understanding who the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is. Although many people may think the name Baptist primarily identifies us by our practice of believers’ baptism by immersion,¹ our mode of baptism is only part of what designates us as Baptist.

The most important of these determinations is that we affirm the Lordship of Christ, meaning that we look to the life of Christ as the example after which we pattern our life of faith and to the death and resurrection of Christ as the act in which God offered redemption for us and all of creation. Faith in Christ is central to our understanding of every other aspect of what it means to be Baptist.

The historical movement with which we most closely identify is one begun in England in the early 1600’s by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, two ministers who, frustrated with the practices of the Church of England, aligned themselves with the Separatists and sought reform. While Baptist doctrine has always maintained strong connections with the theological foundations of the early church fathers and mothers, early Baptists also relied heavily on Protestant Reformers for ideas about church practices. Influenced by Martin Luther’s notion of the priesthood of the believer, and the Anabaptist views of believer’s baptism, local church autonomy, separation of church and state, and non-creedalism (*each of these ideas will be developed in later chapters*), Smyth and Helwys left England because of the threat of persecution and led a small group of brave, like-minded believers to Amsterdam. In 1609, Smyth baptized himself, and then the rest of the group. They believed that since the Church of England was a false church, their earlier baptisms were invalid and that baptism should be reserved for those who made a public confession of faith. Although the two would later part ways, and Helwys would eventually be arrested for his heretical teachings and die in prison, the movement was born, and future Baptists would continue to fight for the freedom of individuals, local congregations and all religious people.²

Once Europeans began traveling across the Atlantic Ocean, it didn’t take long for the Baptist movement to take hold in the New World. In 1638, Roger Williams helped to found the First Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, the only one of the thirteen original colonies to observe complete religious freedom for its citizens. The fiery preaching of the revivals of the Great Awakenings in the mid 1700’s and early 1800’s would expand the size and influence of evangelical groups, including Baptists, especially in the southern United States. But the ideals of Smyth and Helwys would remain the guiding principles of free and faithful Baptists everywhere.

1 Some groups may have a firm grasp on the concept of believers’ baptism by immersion and may not need further explanation. Simply put, it is the practice of baptizing those who have made a public confession of faith in Jesus, with the assumption that those persons have reached an age suitable for understanding such a commitment. Immersion refers to the mode of baptism where the person is completely submerged in water. Although almost all Baptists practice believers’ baptism by immersion, some congregations accept as valid those who have been baptized by other means. If your group has questions about your congregation’s teachings on baptism, you may want to invite your pastor to lead such a discussion with you. For a more complete understanding of the biblical and historical foundations of baptism in the Baptist tradition, see R. Wayne Stacy’s article on baptism in *A Baptist’s Theology*, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1999.

2 H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*. 1987.

Even with splits among U.S. Baptists, first between North and South prior to the American Civil War, and then between moderates and conservatives in the South beginning in the 1980's, many Baptists have attempted to keep these historic Baptist principles alive.³ The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was formed in the early 1990's out of a convergence of these traditions, and the movement called CBF still strives to remain, at its heart, true to its Baptist heritage.⁴

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship affirms these Baptist Principles as part of our core values:

***Soul Freedom** - We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We affirm the freedom and responsibility of every person to relate directly to God without the imposition of creed or the control of clergy or government.

***Bible Freedom** - We believe in the authority of Scripture. We believe the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, is central to the life of the individual and the church. We affirm the freedom and right of every Christian to interpret and apply scripture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

***Church Freedom** - We believe in the autonomy of every local church. We believe Baptist churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate as they deem appropriate in the larger Body of Christ.

***Religious Freedom** - We believe in the freedom of religion, freedom for religion, and freedom from religion. We support the separation of church and state.

3 These events are described in "CBF 101: An Introduction to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," written by Dr. Larry Hovis, Executive Coordinator of CBF of North Carolina, an excerpt of which can be found on page 11. For a more detailed treatment of these events, see Walter B. Shurden's *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, Mercer University Press, 1993.

4 If your group is interested in learning more about the beliefs and practices of other denominations, you might consider having representatives from various churches come to share information with your group. One resource for information on a variety of religious groups, both Christian and non-Christian, is a workbook published by Abingdon Press called *To the Point - Religions: Encountering People of Other Faiths*. It is available from Cokesbury. Although it was published in 1995 and some of the data is outdated, it is a great resource for introducing youth to other faith traditions.

Part 2: Why *Cooperative Baptists*?⁵

As much as Baptists are built on principles of autonomy and freedom, we recognize the importance of cooperating to achieve shared goals. We cooperate voluntarily as individuals, congregations and institutions who share a similar view of what it means to be Baptist. We believe that by uniting our efforts and resources, we can accomplish more together than we ever could alone.

We work together to send missionaries and support missions causes, both Baptist and ecumenical, which meet human need while sharing the love and Good News of Jesus Christ. All of us are called to be co-laborers in the task of fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission. We want to enable believers and churches to work cooperatively with other Great Commission Christians to activate this global missions calling in their communities and throughout the world.

We believe the Bible teaches that. . .

- *God is the one triune God, Creator of all people in God's own image.
- *All people are separated from God by sin.
- *Christ is the Savior and Redeemer for all peoples.
- *The Holy Spirit convicts and converts all who believe in Christ, teaches the church in the voice of the Living Christ, and empowers the church and all believers for the mission of Christ in the world.
- *Christ calls us to minister redemptively to the spiritual, physical and social needs of individuals and communities.
- *Every believer and every church is responsible for sharing the Gospel with all people.

Instead of owning and controlling institutions, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship seeks to discover other organizations that can provide resources for congregations and partner with them in mutually beneficial ways. This partnership model includes support of identity partners, independent agencies and institutions, which we believe to be working to preserve and promote Baptist principles. These partners include:

- *Baptist World Alliance (www.bwanet.org)
- *Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (www.bjcra.org)
- *Baptist Center for Ethics (www.ethicsdaily.com)
- *Christian Churches Together (www.christianchurchestogether.org)
- *Bread for the World (www.bread.org)
- *Associated Baptist Press (www.abpnews.com)
- **Baptists Today* (www.baptiststoday.org)

5 Much of the material for this section is taken from the website for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: www.thefellowship.info.

The partnership model also goes hand in hand with CBF's commitment to lifelong learning for laity and clergy. We are committed to Baptist theological education that affords intellectual and spiritual freedom to both students and professors in an atmosphere of reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship. We cooperate to provide theological education through support of independent colleges, universities, seminaries and divinity schools, in order to prepare Baptist leaders for service in our churches and the world. These schools include:

- *Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
- *Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, VA
- *Baptist University of the Americas, San Antonio, TX
- *Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Forth Worth, TX
- *Campbell University Divinity School, Buies Creek, NC
- *Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Atlanta, GA
- *Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee, KS
- *Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC
- *George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX
- *International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic
- *Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin Simmons University, Abilene, TX
- *Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC
- *M. Christopher White School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC
- *McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- *Wake Forest University Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC

Part 3: Why A Fellowship?

Out of our shared Baptist principles and our united efforts, our fellowship grows. The word “fellowship” is one translation of the Greek word *koinonia* (also translated community), which indicates an affection for one another. We are kindred spirits who work together to accomplish our shared purposes, but ours is not a business partnership. It is less of a contract and more of a covenant. It is not coerced and few restrictions apply: We ask only that those in the Fellowship be “Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.”⁶

This association is voluntary. Churches and individuals may participate at whatever level of involvement they choose and are free to partner with whatever other institutions and organizations they choose.

But how are we different from other denominations or conventions? Although we realize that more and more moderate Baptists claim CBF as their primary denominational identity, we have resisted traditional denominational structures with all their trappings. As mentioned in the previous section, we do not own schools or buildings or institutions. We do not require binding commitments to any organizational documents or positions. And we attempt to avoid much of the bureaucracy and control of more institutionalized denominations. Ours is a grass-roots movement of Baptists, guided by a group of elected leaders and supported by individuals and churches from across the country. Our leadership and membership are as diverse as Baptists themselves: moderate and conservative, lay and clergy, male and female, urban and rural, liturgical and contemporary, representing a variety of races, regions and theological persuasions. We seek to partner with any Great Commission Christians who affirm the Lordship of Christ and the Baptist principles upon which we are built.

But with freedom and diversity come certain risks. We celebrate that our diversity often creates differences of opinion and practice. We encourage these many voices to contribute to decisions that are made and to the vision of our movement. While this model may not be as efficient as others, we believe it affirms our Baptist ideals of freedom and reflects the rich diversity of the larger Body of Christ.

6 Quoted from Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s Identity Statement

Lesson 1: What Do the Words Mean?

Focal Scriptures:

Colossians 3:12-17; Mark 1:16-20; Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

****Why are you Baptist? Because your parents are? Because it's the closest church to your house? Because your church has the coolest youth group in town? All of these may be legitimate reasons that you are part of a Baptist church, but what defines the Baptist movement is much more. Discuss what defines what it means to be Baptist and what distinguishes us from other Christian denominations.**

****Have the youth investigate the websites for the CBF identity partners. A list of these websites is included with the background materials for this lesson. If internet access is not available, request brochures or newsletters from these organizations for the youth to examine. If you have a large group, break them up into smaller groups to research the various partners. Based on what they find, have youth report on the mission statements, values and core beliefs of these various groups. How do these organizations reflect the mission and values of CBF?**

****Discuss how a fellowship is different from a convention or denomination. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? How does the fellowship model reflect our Baptist principles?**

****Read Colossians 3:12-17. What does the passage say to us about the importance of cooperation and fellowship? What does Paul say are the things that bind a fellowship together? Why were these things important for the early church? Why are they important for us?**

****For the following activity, you will need a ball of yarn or spool of sturdy string and a ball (such as a kickball or light-weight child's ball).**

Have the youth form a circle in a large, open space. This activity works best with at least six people. The more people you have, the better the visual demonstration; however, if you have more than 25-30 people, you may want to break them up into smaller groups.

Hold the end of the yarn and toss the ball to someone else in the circle but not the person next to you. Have each person hold onto the yarn and throw the ball to someone else until everyone has received the yarn and a "web" is formed. Ask the youth what it looks like—a web, a net? Why is it important to cooperate? What would happen if we tried to balance the ball on a single strand of yarn? How much weight could one strand hold? Throw the ball onto the web of yarn. Try to roll or bounce the ball around. What happens?

When we are all connected by the yarn, it forms a network, a safety net of cooperation. It can hold the ball and support much more weight. The more people in the circle, the more tightly we are woven together and the more effective we can be. How does this demonstration relate to CBF's ideas about partnership and cooperation? How does our working together make us stronger and more effective? Can you think of other symbols that represent cooperation?

****Read Mark 1:16-20. How is the symbol of a net important in this story? How does it relate to CBF's understanding of partnership? Of missions? In what ways are we, like the disciples, called to leave our way of life and follow Christ?**

Closing Prayer:

God, we thank you for the community of faith with which we pray: for the differences among us by which we are enriched and through which the Spirit prompts us to grow; your amazing grace that forgives and restores us; new insights from ancient, holy words; traditions of the church that still give us meaning today; hymns and prayers that pour out of our hearts into yours; Christian friends who perceive our strengths when we cannot; words of encouragement, affection and trust; shared laughter, healing of wounds, and hope shining in the darkness. For all these things, we give you our deepest gratitude. Amen.⁷

⁷ Sharlande Sledge. *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing. 1999. p. 98.

Resource Pages - Lesson 1

CBF 101: An Introduction to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

By Larry Hovis, Executive Coordinator, *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina*

In college courses, “101” usually refers to basic, foundational, or introductory subject matter. In these days of great change in Baptist life, many members of Baptist churches are seeking to learn more about Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). The purpose of this document is to help with this educational process.

Background

Beginning in 1979, a concerted effort was undertaken to bring about a drastic change in the leadership and direction of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This effort was accomplished through a well-organized political process that involved electing a convention president who would make appointments that eventually resulted in placing persons on boards of trustees of agencies and institutions who would carry out the desired changes. Control of boards of trustees was accomplished in about twelve years, along with replacing the administrations, and eventually, most employees of the agencies and institutions. Great attention was given to altering the character and culture of the seminaries and mission boards. Those who supported these changes labeled this process, “The Conservative Resurgence.” Those who opposed these changes referred to the process as, “The Fundamentalist Takeover.” Regardless of one’s approval or disapproval of the changes, all agreed that by 1991, the SBC had undergone a major transformation.

That year, a group gathered in Atlanta representing active Southern Baptists who were displeased with the new direction of the SBC. This group formed a new body which was incorporated under Georgia law as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The focus of CBF in those early days was to provide a place of fellowship for people who felt disenfranchised from the SBC and a funding channel for missionaries and new theological schools that were beginning to be birthed.

Today, CBF has grown far beyond its humble beginnings. Though many of the churches and individuals who partner together through CBF still have a connection to the SBC, CBF is recognized as a separate body, as evidenced by its recent admission as a member of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), an organization of over two hundred international Baptist bodies. (The SBC has subsequently withdrawn from the BWA.)

Baptist Principles: A Firm Foundation

CBF adherents have always placed a high premium on what are commonly referred to as “historic Baptist principles.” In fact, disagreement over the interpretation of these principles, and how they are applied in local churches and in denominational life, has been at the heart of the controversy in the SBC. CBF’s understanding of basic Christian and Baptist principles are reflected in its official documents and strategic plan.

- Our Identity – “We are a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.”
- Our Vision – “Being the presence of Christ in the world.”
- Our Mission – “Serving Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission.”
- Our Core Values
 - Baptist Principles
 - Soul Freedom – We believe in the priesthood of all believers and the equality of every church member.
 - Bible Freedom – We believe in the authority of Scripture under the Lordship of Christ without the imposition of creedal statements.
 - Church Freedom – We believe in the autonomy of every local church and affirm every church’s right to determine its faith, practice and leadership without outside interference.
 - Religious Freedom – We believe in full religious liberty and the separation of church and state.
 - Biblically-based Global missions – This includes belief in the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); the sinfulness of all humankind; Christ as Savior and Redeemer for all peoples; the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and empower believers; the responsibility of every believer and church to share the Gospel; the need to cooperate with others in mission to the world.
 - Resource Model
 - Justice and Reconciliation

- Lifelong Learning and Ministry
- Trustworthiness
- Effectiveness

CBF Ministries

Current CBF ministries fall into four areas or “strategic initiatives”:

- Faith Formation – Assisting congregations with evangelism, outreach and spiritual growth.
- Building Community – Encouraging congregational health, Baptist identity, reconciliation and justice, marriage and family ministries, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and endorsing chaplains and pastoral counselors.
- Leadership Development – In congregations, through theological education (in partnership with seminaries and divinity schools) and in collegiate ministry.
- Global Missions and Ministries – Through partnership missions with local churches, reaching the most neglected peoples of the world and planting new churches (over one-half of our resources are spent on Global Missions and Ministries).

A Paradigm Shift: From Convention to Partnership

Most lifelong Southern Baptist adults were nurtured in a “convention culture” in which congregations, district associations, state conventions and the national convention were closely connected through money (which flowed from congregations to associations and state conventions to the national convention) and programs (which flowed from the national convention to state conventions and associations to congregations). Theoretically, we exercised autonomy at every level, but in practice, we functioned as an organizational pyramid with congregations forming the base and the national convention sitting at the apex.

Alternatively, CBF promotes a “partnership paradigm” in which congregations are at the center of Baptist life. Congregations are encouraged to determine their unique, God-given mission and then choose partners to assist them in accomplishing that mission. CBF does not demand exclusive loyalty but humbly asks for the opportunity to be one (hopefully a significant one) of a congregation’s many missional partners.

The CBF Movement: National and State Fellowships

In addition to CBF, which has its offices in Atlanta, there are eighteen autonomous state and regional CBF-related bodies. These bodies work very closely with CBF but are not franchises or field offices. CBF Executive Coordinator Daniel Vestal calls this unique relationship between national and state CBF bodies “a seamless movement.”

CBF of North Carolina (CBFNC) is funded and organized separately from CBF. We seek to be the face of CBF in North Carolina by promoting CBF ministries in our state. We also have our own ministries which include multiple mission projects; support for theological education; retreats for youth, children and adults; and a reference and referral service to help churches seeking staff and ministers seeking ministry placement find each other. We extend the partnership paradigm in North Carolina by offering a *Mission Resource Plan* which allows churches to support historic North Carolina Baptist ministries through CBFNC. We have our own paid staff, elected leadership, annual general assembly, and many events throughout the year. Our mission is “Bringing Baptists of North Carolina together for Christ-centered ministry.”

Getting Connected

CBF, at both the state and national levels, is not a member organization, but a fellowship of churches and individuals who voluntarily cooperate to do together what we could never accomplish alone, for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Please attend one of our assemblies, participate in one of our ministries, or call on one of our staff members or volunteer leaders for information or assistance. If you embrace our mission, vision and values, and desire to share in our ministries, you are welcome in our fellowship. Of course, your financial gifts are most welcome, too. May God bless and guide us as we seek to be the presence of Christ in the world, together.

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Lesson 2: Sweet Freedom

Freedom is important for life and faith. Inherent in the concept of freedom is an affirmation of human dignity. It implies empowerment and self-determination, a recognition that human beings are capable of being trustworthy to think and make decisions for themselves. While our Christian faith teaches us that we all have the capacity for great sin and evil, we also believe that we, each and all, are created in God's image and are unique and gifted and loved by God.

God's gift of freedom to us is an expression of God's great love for us. The Protestant Reformers believed strongly that matters of faith were matters of individual conscience and could not be forced or coerced either by church or civil authorities. In his book *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, Walter Shurden has said, "[Jesus] invited personal response based on voluntary commitment."¹ From the beginning, Baptists have embraced the freedoms granted by God and defended those freedoms for others.

In Lesson 1, we discussed the Baptist principles upon which the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was built. Each of these principles affirms the freedoms that we cherish for ourselves, our churches and others. Three of these principles have to do with how we relate to God and to one another within the church:

*Soul Freedom - We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We affirm the freedom and responsibility of every person to relate directly to God without the imposition of creed or the control of clergy or government.

*Bible Freedom - We believe in the authority of Scripture. We believe the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, is central to the life of the individual and the church. We affirm the freedom and right of every Christian to interpret and apply scripture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

*Church Freedom - We believe in the autonomy of every local church. We believe Baptist churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate as they deem appropriate in the larger Body of Christ.

Freedom to Be God's Child

Central to our understanding of faith is our belief that as children of God, we are free to relate to and talk to God, to worship and to live out our faith as we believe God has called us to do. We call that freedom the priesthood of all believers. This doctrine, as understood by Martin Luther² and other Protestant reformers, teaches that individuals do not need a human mediator, such as clergy or creed, in order to pray, confess, worship or serve. We can each relate to God as we are led by the Holy Spirit to do. This belief emphasizes that each soul is competent to stand before God, to bring its petitions to God and to receive God's grace.

While some churches require confession and certain prayers or other acts of worship to be done through a priest or other clergy, and then for those clergy to impose a certain penance in order for the person to be restored to a right relationship with the church and with God, Baptists believe that Christ is the only mediator we need and that we pray directly to him and through him in order to relate to God. While most Baptist churches understand that it is important to have educated, trained clergy in order to provide worship and organizational leadership, pastoral care and guidance for the congregation, we do not hold that ordained clergy necessarily have any more special relationship with God than anyone else. While clergy have been called out by God for specific ministries, each baptized Christian is a minister with the same freedoms and responsibilities to God and the Church.

The belief that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ goes hand in hand with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. We believe that it is not through a particular intervention of the Church or clergy that we are saved. Nor is our salvation secured by any works or good deeds that we might do. While Baptists and other Protestants affirm the importance of the Church for living out the life of faith in community and the central role that good works play in the demonstration of our faith, we believe that our salvation is secured only by the redemptive work of Christ on our behalf. We are reconciled to God by placing our faith in the Christ who came as the incarnation of God's grace for us.

1 Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993, 25.

2 Martin Luther. *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520).

Freedom to Read God's Word

Related to our belief in soul freedom is our belief in Bible freedom. Baptists have long taught that individuals have the right and responsibility to read and interpret Scripture for themselves. Baptists typically hold a high view of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, the written account of God's activity in human history. Our Bible includes both the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament (writings of the early Church), and both are used in the context of worship and Bible study. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and within the context of a faith community that will hold them accountable, each Christian is given the freedom to read God's word, to interpret its meaning, and to apply it to their life of faith.

Associated with an understanding of soul freedom and Bible freedom is an emphasis on non-creedalism. The word creed comes from the Latin word "credo," meaning "I believe." Creeds were first developed by the church councils, where leaders such as bishops and cardinals met in the early years of the Church to make decisions about the teachings and practices of the Church. Creeds were used to summarize the accepted beliefs of the Church and to denounce heresies (false teachings) that arose. For centuries, creeds such as the Nicene Creed and Apostle's Creed helped to influence the direction of the teachings of the Church. They were also helpful in a time when printed versions of the Bible were rare and few people were literate because they could be easily memorized and recited in worship.

During the Middle Ages, corruption within church leadership caused some to begin to use the creeds to oppress and persecute people who disagreed with them. During these times, there was little or no concept of religious freedom. Most governments supported an official church with which everyone in the country was required to identify, and many clergy had great power to decide whether someone's faith practices were acceptable or not. Some of those in leadership feared that new ideas and interpretations of Scripture would threaten their power to control the thought and practice of the Church. In some instances, people were even tortured or burned at the stake for refusing to affirm a certain creed. Especially after the invention of the print press, around the year 1450, the Bible became much more accessible, and more people were able to read and interpret Scripture for themselves. During the early years of the Protestant Reformation, Baptists were among those who rejected the use of creeds for forcing people to prove their orthodoxy (right belief). Baptist Reformers said that our only creed should be the Bible itself, believing that a creed was only someone else's interpretation of what is contained in Scripture. Baptists thought that each Christian should be able to follow their own conscience in interpreting Scripture, even if that meant differences of opinion, without the imposition of creeds by the Church hierarchy.

In his book *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, Walter Shurden has said, "Historically, Baptists have resisted any and all creeds. And they have for two very good reasons. First, no one doctrinal statement can summarize adequately the biblical mandate for behavior and belief. It is better, therefore, to stay with the Bible alone. Second, Baptists have feared creeds because of the seemingly inevitable tendency to make the creed the *norm* and to *force* compliance to the creed."³

Some Baptist congregations choose to use one of the more widely accepted creeds as an affirmation of faith (especially the Apostle's Creed), and some groups have written their own affirmations. An affirmation of faith, sometimes called a confession, allows us to state the tenants of our faith succinctly but is not binding. No one is required to swear allegiance to or sign a certain creed for participation in the church, and a variety of affirmations of faith may be used to verbalize what we believe, to unite us in worship as a community of faith, and to witness to others of our faith in Christ.

Freedom to Be the Church

Another component of freedom for Baptists is church freedom. Baptists practice a congregational polity (church governance), which says that each local congregation is an autonomous body of voluntarily affiliated members. Each congregation can decide for itself, most often by a democratic process, issues such as how it will organize, whom it will ordain for ministry and place in leadership, what its worship style will be, what doctrinal or social positions it will take, in what missions and ministries it will participate, with whom it will affiliate and any number of other decisions that are made

3 Shurden, 14.

within the church.

Local church autonomy means that some Baptist churches will have contemporary worship, some will have traditional Baptist worship and others will choose liturgical worship. It means that some congregations will have women as deacons or ministers and others will not. It means that each church can decide by what method it will elect deacons, officers and committees. It means that one congregation may affiliate with a local association, a state convention, a national organization, any combination of these or none at all. The belief in and practice of local church autonomy affirms that if each individual Christian is competent to relate to God as he or she is led by the Holy Spirit, then any given community of such believers is also competent to make these decisions.

Each individual or congregation affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship does so voluntarily and may or may not choose to affiliate with our other partner organizations. Association with CBF does not require any doctrinal allegiance other than affirmation of the Lordship of Christ or any particular denominational affiliation other than identification as a Baptist Christian.

Risky Business

Some may read about these freedoms and react with alarm or fear. Surely giving people this much freedom and allowing for this much difference is risky! Indeed, it is, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship believes it is worth the risk. God loves us enough to grant us this kind of freedom because the inherent worth and dignity of each person created in God's image requires it. God gives us this freedom because God understands that faith or devotion that is coerced is not sincere but that faith in Christ is best lived out without externally imposed restraints but through personal conviction and commitment. In order for faith to be genuine it must be free to be experienced, explored and practiced by the individual as he or she responds to the call of God and the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 2: Sweet Freedom

Focal Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 1:4b-6; Galatians 5:1, 13

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

*Have youth take turns reading the Focal Scriptures from 1 Peter, Revelation and Galatians. What do they have to say about freedom? About responsibility? How are the two related? Does freedom mean that anything goes? Why do Baptists believe that freedom is so important?

*Have someone read the passage from Ephesians. What does this passage say about the nature of our fellowship within the church? What does it say about unity and diversity within the Christian community? Why do you think God calls people with many different gifts together? What are the opportunities and the challenges created by these differences?

*Creeds and Affirmations:

1. Give each youth a copy of the Apostle's Creed and Nicene Creed found on page 18. How are they similar? Different? Does anyone in the class have either of these memorized. If so, does the version you know differ from the one printed here?
2. Why were the creeds important to the early Church? Why might church leaders be tempted to use devices such as creeds to punish people with different opinions? Can you think of other examples from history or today where religion has been used to control people's thoughts and opinions?
3. Does your church use any kind of confession or affirmation of faith in worship? What other parts of worship and church life might serve as a creed, stating what we believe? Hymns? Prayers? Actions?

*Have each youth write their own Credo or Affirmation of Faith. Encourage them to be as concise as possible. It may help to give them a limit, such as five sentences or fewer, so that they have to consider the points of their faith that are most significant for them. Give the group a few minutes to write down their ideas or have them prepare this ahead of time to bring with them. Have those who are willing read theirs to the group. Are they struck by how similar or how different they are? How would they feel if they were forced to declare allegiance to someone else's beliefs?

*For high school youth or young adults: A discussion of theories of justification will be a bit too much for most youth, but you can have older youth discuss what some passages of Scripture say about salvation. Have the youth read Romans 3:21-24, Galatians 2:16, and James 2:14-16. What does it mean that we are saved by grace and not works? What is the role of good works in our life of faith?

*Schedule a movie night for your group to watch *Wide Awake* (1998, starring Denis Leary, Dana Delaney, Joseph Cross and Rosie O'Donnell. You can find it inexpensively online.) *You can consult www.kids-in-mind.com or www.screenit.com to check content for this and many other movies.* *Wide Awake* is the story of a boy named Josh who embarks on a year-long journey of looking for God. It is a good movie with serious theological considerations for youth as well as plenty of humorous moments. His questions and experiences may provide good materials for discussion about our having the freedom to discover faith for ourselves and how we receive and discern God's revelation.

*This discussion about freedom may also lead your group to a further discussion about the responsibilities that accompany that freedom. While we will take up some of these issues in Session 4 when we discuss missions, if questions arise here, it might be appropriate to pursue them while there is interest. A movie suggestion that may be helpful in exploring these issues of individual responsibility and how one person's willingness to stand up for what they believe in can make a difference is *Amazing Grace* (2006), based on the true story of William Wilberforce (Ioan Gruffudd) who embarks on a courageous quest to end the British slave trade.

Closing Prayer:

Ever-present God, stir in our hearts a holy expectancy so that we will be ready and open to hear your voice. May our spirit be open to the calling of your Spirit, that in listening for you we might hear you, that in waiting for you we might meet you, that in meeting you we might follow you. Amen.⁴

⁴ Peggy Haymes. *Be Thou Present: Prayers, Litanies, and Hymns for Christian Worship*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing. 1994. pp. 10-11.

Resource Pages

Lesson 2

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into Hell; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Lesson 3: Free to Be

Picture this: You and your family are attending worship one Sunday morning. As the service ends and people start to file out of the sanctuary, you hear a commotion outside. As you exit, you can see men in uniforms carrying guns. They are yelling questions and insults, intimidating the worshipers, members of your church family whom you have known all your life. As the church members try to answer the questions, the soldiers begin to handcuff them and take them to jail, without any explanation, without any information. In the days to come, other church members have trouble conducting business. Neighbors won't be seen talking to them. Their children are excluded at school. Church members find themselves ignored, discriminated against, shunned throughout the community.

Sound far-fetched? Hard to believe? For those of us who live in a country where we enjoy complete freedom to believe and to worship however we choose, a scene like this is almost impossible to fathom. But in many parts of the world, Christians regularly face these kinds of challenges, being harassed and persecuted simply for worshiping, carrying a Bible, praying, or expressing their faith in any way. Religious liberty is something we take for granted. It is something that many people in the world continue to fight for and to long for.

As Baptists we celebrate our own freedom to believe, worship, study, fellowship and govern ourselves as we are led by the Holy Spirit to do, but another important part of that freedom is honoring and protecting those same freedoms for others. The 19th-century British philosopher Herbert Spencer said, "No one can be perfectly free till all are free."¹ Historically, our understanding of this kind of freedom as it applies to religion has had two emphases:

1. Religious Liberty:

Every human being has the right to follow his or her own conscience in matters of religion. What you believe and how you choose to put that faith into practice is not something that can be coerced by any church or government authority, by any group or individual. Baptists have long held that religious liberty is a precious gift, something to be preserved and protected for all. And we have long understood that as long as there is anyone whose religious liberty is denied or threatened, ours may also be in jeopardy. Such liberty is not only for those who are in the majority or those who agree with the prevailing opinions. In order for it to be secure for any of us, the freedom to believe and worship as we choose, as well as the freedom not to believe or worship at all, must be defended for everyone.

And when Baptists talk about freedom, we mean complete freedom. Walter Shurden writes, "Freedom of religion represents a commitment to complete religious liberty and not simply religious toleration. Religious liberty and religious toleration are not the same. Religious toleration is concession; religious liberty is a right. Religious toleration is a measure of expediency; religious liberty is a matter of principle."²

As we learned in Lesson 1, the first Baptists sought freedom from persecution in England by fleeing to Amsterdam, where religious diversity was tolerated. Baptists also helped to establish religious liberty in the New World. In 1636, Roger Williams, an English Separatist, helped to establish a settlement at Providence, which would later become part of the colony of Rhode Island. Williams was led by the principle that "God requireth not an uniformity of religion" and made certain that all people and religious groups would enjoy what he called "soul liberty."³ Williams was one of about a dozen people who helped to found the first Baptist church in the New World in 1639, and when he became governor of Rhode Island, he insisted that the colony's charter guarantee, for the first time in American history, complete religious liberty for all who would settle there.

1 Herbert Spencer. *Social Statics*, part IV, chapter 30.

2 Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993, 49.

3 *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, Edited by Bill J. Leonard. InterVarsity Press, 1994, p. 289.

2. Separation of Church and State:

Another principle that has been championed by Baptists and that has helped to describe what we believe to be the appropriate relationship to government is called separation of church and state. U.S. founders Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and Baptist leaders like John Leland worked to establish protection for religious liberty in this young nation. Baptists were among those who insisted that our nation's Constitution include a Bill of Rights which would enumerate those rights believed to be given by God and protected by law, including freedom of religion. Despite its frequent usage in modern dialogue, the phrase from Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, "a wall of separation between church and state," appears nowhere in the official documents of our country's founding. What we do find is the First Amendment to the Constitution which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." Later was added the Fourteenth Amendment, extending this requirement to all state governments. Disagreement over the interpretation of this Constitutional provision continues to this day.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship identifies religious liberty and separation of church and state among its core values. Its partnership with Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty has been important for CBF since its beginnings. The mission of the Baptist Joint Committee is "to defend and extend God-given religious liberty for all, furthering the Baptist heritage that champions the principle that religion must be freely exercised, neither advanced nor inhibited by government."⁴ To learn more about the work of Baptist Joint Committee, visit its website at www.bjconline.org.

4 Quoted from the website of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, www.bjconline.org.

Lesson 3: Free to Be

Focal Scriptures:

John 8:31-32; Matthew 22:15-22

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

*Discuss the quote about freedom by Herbert Spencer. Do you agree or disagree with his statement?

*Why is it important for us to support religious freedom, even when it may mean supporting someone's right to do or believe something with which we disagree?

*Do you agree with Walter Shurden that religious liberty and religious toleration are not the same? How are they different? Why is religious toleration not enough?

*Bring with you or have the youth research, from the internet, magazines and newspapers, articles about religious liberty issues. Look especially for stories about religious persecution around the world, Supreme Court decisions dealing with religious issues; any kind of government influence or interference in religion. Have the youth read and discuss these articles. Some recent events or issues you may wish to discuss include the FLDS charges of polygamy and child abuse; Muslim restrictions on women (requirement to wear head coverings, honor killings, etc.); prayer in public schools; government funding of faith-based charities; references to God in the pledge of allegiance and on currency. You may want to check the website for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty for the most recent issues and court cases.

*What are some of the negative results of a lack of or limitations on religious freedom? How can a lack of religious liberty lead to oppression or abuses in other areas of life? Political, social, economic, etc? Should there be any limits on religious liberty? If so, what?

*Would religious liberty mean more to you if you were a member of a minority religion in the U.S. or a Christian in a non-Christian nation? You may consider having someone who practices a minority religion come to talk with your group about their appreciation of religious liberty.

*Discuss the importance of the four freedoms named in the Baptist principles. Why have these been important for Baptist history? What has this history contributed to ideas about religion in our nation and world? How do you see these freedoms at work in your own congregation?

*The following activity will more easily be done in a larger open space.

Ask for at least four volunteers. The rest of your group will serve as observers and reporters. On each volunteer, place some physical limitation: blindfold one person, bind the feet of one person and the hands of another, etc. Have one additional volunteer on which you place no limitations. Ask each volunteer to complete a simple task such as stacking books or placing small items in a box or basket. Depending on the space available, you could have them do this simultaneously or take turns.

Ask the rest of the group to observe the volunteers and to discuss how their performance of the task was affected by the limitations placed on them. The person who is completely free to move around should be able to complete the task easily. The others will experience varying degrees of difficulty depending on the limitation imposed.

How is this exercise a metaphor for the importance of religious freedom? How might the practice of your faith be affected if you were not free to follow your conscience and to believe and practice as you choose?

*Read and discuss the focal Scriptures.

Consider Matthew 22:15-22. How did Jesus understand the proper relationship between religion and government? As a follower of Jesus, what is your responsibility to participate in the larger society?

Look at John 8:31-32. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “the truth will set you free”? Are there different types of freedom? If so, what? What type was Jesus talking about? Why do you think Jesus placed such a high value on freedom?

Closing Prayer:

God of all creation and Lord of all life, you have created each of us to be unique and special yet all in your image, and you have breathed into us your life-giving Spirit. May your Spirit blow among us now as a wind of change, that we may love and respect all of your children, regardless of our differences, and that we may seek peace and reconciliation in a world so determined to promote hatred and division. Transform our hearts and minds, that in all things we might seek your righteousness. In the name of the One who revealed your righteousness to us, even Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Lesson 4: Go Into All the World

On June 17, 1812, Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Calcutta, India. At the age of 25, he had been commissioned as the first Protestant missionary sent from North America. The Judsons were originally commissioned by the Congregational Church, but during their voyage, after a detailed study of Matthew 28:19-20, they became convinced that believer's baptism was theologically valid and should be practiced in obedience to the command of Jesus. After arriving in India, the Judsons were baptized by immersion and affiliated with the American Baptist Missionary Union and then began what would be a nearly forty-year career in Burma (now called Myanmar). Thus began the long and storied development of the movement of Baptist missionaries from North America into all the world. Over the next two centuries, tens of thousands of missionaries and hundreds of millions of dollars would be sent into every corner of the globe in order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Missions has always been at the heartbeat of what it means to be Baptist. And missions has been central to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship movement from its beginnings. Field personnel and volunteers, individuals and congregations work together to share the love of Christ and help CBF to fulfill its mission: to serve Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given purpose.

Biblically-based Global Missions

All of us are called to be co-laborers in the task of fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission. We believe the Bible teaches that:

- *God is the one triune God, Creator of all people in God's own image
- *All people are separated from God by sin
- *Christ is the Savior and Redeemer for all peoples
- *The Holy Spirit convicts and converts all who believe in Christ, teaches the church in the voice of the Living Christ, and empowers the church and all believers in the mission of Christ in the world.
- *Christ calls us to minister redemptively to the spiritual, physical and social needs of individuals and communities
- *Every believer and every church is responsible for sharing the Gospel with all people. We want to enable believers and churches to work cooperatively with other Great Commission Christians to activate this global missions calling in their communities and throughout the world.¹

As CBF Baptists, we proudly claim the name of Great Commission Christians (Matthew 28:18-20). We are on mission because God is on mission and has invited us to participate in that work. We also believe that in our work, we are called to live out the Great Commandment (Mark 12:29-31). Jesus said that the most important things we can do in our life of faith is to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. God's mission, and therefore our mission as God's children, is redemption and reconciliation for all people and ultimately for all of creation. The Good News that we share is that God in Christ offers compassion for the here and now and hope for eternal life.

CBF missions seeks to demonstrate the Incarnation of Christ (Christ's coming in human flesh). The Incarnation is witness to God's great love for us. Scripture is clear that, like Christ, we are both body and spirit. Whether we say we are embodied spirits or spirit-filled bodies, we cannot separate the two. At creation, God formed us from dust in God's own image and enlivened us with the breath of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 2:7). In our redemption, the Word of God became human flesh in order to save us (John 1:1-9), and when Christ returns we will be like him (1 John 3:1-2). That means for us that if we are to participate fully in God's mission of loving and redeeming humanity, we are called to nurture both the body and the spirit.

So, our mission is not just about meeting people's physical needs and it is not just about sharing the message that if we confess our sins and profess Christ as Lord we will be saved – it is both, and the two cannot be separated!

¹ From CBF's statement "Who Are We: What Fellowship People Do."

CBF uses the name “Global Missions” in order to indicate that our work is worldwide. As our world has become increasingly interdependent and people of all languages, cultures and colors can now be found living around the world, we no longer think of missions as being divided into categories of work we do at home and abroad. Through our mission efforts we seek to embrace the world and cross all kinds of borders of nation, language and tradition. CBF missions seeks to participate in God’s mission through several means:

- *Serving the most neglected and unreached people groups with short-term and long-term field personnel
- *Recognizing a world without borders where we do not work only within national political borders but minister to people groups wherever they live
- *Partnering with other Great Commission Christians in our missions efforts (See our list of partners in Lesson 1.)
- *Working to promote the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) of addressing extreme hunger and poverty issues around the world.²

Our missions initiatives include:³

- *Together for Hope, the Fellowship’s rural poverty initiative
- *New Church Starts
- *Disaster Response in the United States and around the world
- *Communities of Missional Practice where groups of Christians and/or churches who share a passion for a particular area of ministry meet together to discuss and share ideas. Some of the communities related to CBF are: Poverty/Transformation Ministries; Disaster Response Ministry; Internationals Ministries; Church Starting/Faith Sharing; Justice and Peacemaking Ministries; Medical Ministries; Education/Economic Development Ministries.

CBF Global Missions partners with churches and others in sharing the love of Jesus Christ to the most neglected, unevangelized and marginalized peoples in a world without borders.

² See www.un.org/millenniumgoals and www.micahchallenge.org for more information. These can also be found at www.thefellowship.info/mdg.

³ See www.thefellowship.info/Missions for information about these and other CBF missions efforts.

Lesson 4: Go Into All the World

Focal Scriptures:

Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 12:29-31

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

**Read the focal Scripture passages of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. How are the two related? How do they inform and affect one another?

**As Christians, how do we understand our responsibility and motivation to go into all the world? How would you define God's mission in the world? How do you think you are called to participate in that mission?

**Prepare a printout or poster listing the MDG's. Why do you think the United Nations as well as many communities of faith, including CBF, have endorsed these goals? How do these goals relate to your understanding of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment? What can you do to make progress toward meeting these goals?

**Choose one or more secular songs that address our responsibilities to care for one another and play them for the group.

Also consider having a printout of the lyrics that the group might follow along. Some suggestions are "Hands" by Jewel; "Waiting On the World to Change" by John Mayer; "Hammer and a Nail" by Indigo Girls; "There's a Hole In the World Tonight" by the Eagles; "Another Day In Paradise" by Phil Collins.

For the song(s), what does it say about our responsibility to one another? What does it say about the impact or effect that we can have in the world and/or for one another? How does the message of the song differ from those of the Focal Scriptures? How are they similar? How might the messages of secular music be used to share messages that are also important to people of faith?

**Have participants plan and carry out a hands-on local mission project.

Perhaps have them consider one or more of the MDG's that their project might help to address. They may need to enlist the help of parents or other adults in the congregation. In preparation for this, you may have them first investigate various agencies and ministries in your area. Find out contact information, purposes and goals of the organization, population served by them, and their needs for volunteers, donations, etc. This investigation will allow them to prepare for their project while also learning more about the needs and the ministries in your community. Schedule a time to carry out the project.

After they have completed the project, plan a time of "debriefing" so that the group can reflect on the experience, what they learned, how the work that they did connects with their faith, and how the ministry helps to fulfill the Great Commission and/or the Great Commandment.

Be sure to take pictures or video of your group involved in the project. Consider finding a time for the youth to report on their project within the congregation, perhaps for a Sunday School class, Mission group, or at a fellowship meal. Have some of the youth speak, share pictures and/or video of their work, etc. Be sure that they focus not only on what they did but also on what they learned and how it affected them and those they served.

**Hold a Hunger Simulation dinner for your group. This activity can be most effective if the participants do not know ahead of time what is going to happen. Consider sending them an invitation to a special dinner to be held in their honor but do not disclose details about the dinner. You will probably need several adults to assist, depending on your group size. One model for how to do this can be found on pages 26-28.

Closing Prayer:

Come into our waiting hearts, Holy God, as we seek you each day of our lives, that in seeking you we might find you, in finding you we might worship you, in worshipping we might give ourselves to you, and in giving ourselves, we might become your hands and feet and heart in this world that needs your love and grace. Mold us, we pray, in the image of your Son, Jesus the Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Resource Pages

Lesson 4

This model for a Hunger Simulation Dinner can work with relatively little preparation and for groups of varying sizes. As each youth enters the rooms, have them draw a number 1, 2 or 3. Instead of numbers, you may also use copies of the “money” found on the following pages. The two pages should be copied to make a two-sided page and then cut into “dollars.” The money represents how much the average person in those areas has to live on per day: \$50 in the First World (1), \$5 in the Second World (2), and \$1 in the Third World (3).

Make sure the vast majority of the numbers are 3’s or \$1’s. Depending on the size of your group, you will want about twenty percent 2’s and ten percent 1’s. For example, for a group of 20 youth, have two 1’s, four 2’s, and fourteen 3’s. Instruct the youth to sit at separate tables that are labeled for their groups, being sure to crowd the larger group of 3’s around as few tables as possible.

First bring out the First World meal. It should be a full meal such as a chicken dinner, or pizza dinner, with a side dish, dessert and choice of beverages. There should be slightly more food than they need for the meal. Have adults serve them, pay attention to them, offer seconds throughout the meal, etc., as though they are in a restaurant.

Once the first meal is served, bring out the Second World meal. It should consist of some kind of simple soup like vegetable or chicken noodle, bread and tea or water. There should be a generous portion for each person but no extra food. This group should be served their food but no further attention paid to them.

Finally, bring out the Third World meal. This group will be served small bowls of rice and a small cup of water with no ice. Consider bringing their food out on trays or a cart, placing it down for them and walking away.

Have the adults observe their reactions to the food they are offered and what they do and say as they eat. How do the First World people respond to having more than they need? Do they offer to share? Do those at the other tables ask for more food from them? Do you observe any resentment? Anger? Compassion? Confusion?

Youth should be instructed that food may not be taken by force or without permission. Any other questions or decisions about how the food is shared are to be left up to the participants. It is best that the adults observe and not interact or intervene with the youth. Once everyone has had a chance to eat, discuss the activity with them. What were the observations and feelings of each group? How did they react to being asked for food or having to ask someone else for food?

Talk to the participants about the significance of the amounts of money represented on their “dollars.” Ask them to imagine having to live on \$1 or \$5 per day. In the U.S., while many people live on less, the average person lives on about \$50 per day. This is about \$54,750 per year for a family three, which, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, is approximately the average family size in the U.S.¹ See the websites which discuss the Millennium Development Goals for more information about income in other areas of the world.

*Read Luke 12:48b. What do the words of Jesus mean for those of us to whom much has been given? What are our responsibilities to others?

1 www.factfinder.census.gov

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
\$1 \$1

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
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FIVE DOLLARS
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\$5 \$5
FIVE DOLLARS
\$5 \$5

\$50 \$50
FIFTY DOLLARS
\$50 \$50

Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
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Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

Most of Eastern Europe (former Soviet and
Eastern bloc countries), Turk states, China,
parts of Northern Africa and the Middle
East.

Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

The United States, Canada, Western Europe,
Japan, and a few small Middle Eastern states
(like Kuwait and Qatar),
Australia

Most of Eastern Europe (former Soviet and
Eastern bloc countries), Turk states, China,
parts of Northern Africa and the Middle
East.

Suggestions for Further Study

Baptist Distinctives and History

Books:

Bill Leonard. *Dictionary of Baptists in America*. InterVarsity Press, 1994.

H. Leon McBeth. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. B & H Academic, 1987.

Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993.
A study guide is also available.

R. Wayne Stacy. *A Baptist's Theology*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1999.

Other Resources:

Celebrate Freedom: A Baptist Distinctives Vacation Bible School. Smyth & Helwys Publishing.

Pamela R. Durso. *A Short History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Movement*. Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2006. (Other resources are available from the Baptist History and Heritage Society at www.baptisthistory.org).

We Are Baptists. Judson Press. Studies available for younger and older elementary, youth and adults.

Youth Ministry Resources

Daniel Bagby. *Beyond the Myths: The Journey to Adulthood*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2007.

Kenda Creasy Dean. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Upper Room Books, 1998.

Charles Hambrick and Joy Lawler. *To the Point - Religions: Encountering People of Other Faiths*. Abingdon Press, 1995.

Brent McDougal. *The River of the Soul: A Spirituality Guide for Christian Youth*. New Hope Publishers, 2001.

David F. White. *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach*. The Pilgrim Press, 2005.

Missions

Books:

Ray Bakke. *Theology as Big as the City*. InterVarsity Press, 1997

Ray Bakke. *The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World*. InterVarsity Press, 1987.

Stan Guthrie. *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century*. Paternoster, 2002.

Nile Harper. *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Toward Justice*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.

Doug Pagitt. *A Christianity Worth Believing: Hope-Filled, Open-Armed, Alive-and-Well Faith*. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Other Resources:

The Justice Mission: A Video-Enhanced Curriculum Reflecting the Heart of God for the Oppressed of the World.
Zondervan Publishing House, 2002.

Hand To Hand. A collection of over 150 mission project ideas compiled by CBF of NC.

Religious Liberty

Books:

C. Welton Gaddy. *Faith and Politics: What's a Christian To Do?* Peake Road, 1996.

Resources available from Baptist Joint Committee:

Citizens of Two Kingdoms: Lessons for Youth in Baptist History and Religious Liberty, 1996.

Freedom is Never Free. A video production of Baptist Joint Committee.

How We Got That Way: Baptists on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State.

An address by Walter B. Shurden delivered at the 1996 Religious Liberty Conference in Washington, D.C.

Our Challenge, Their Future: Securing Religious Liberty for Our Children and Grandchildren.

A video production of Baptist Joint Committee.

Religious Liberty Council Issue Guide: Advocating Religious Liberty in the Public Square.

Connecting in North Carolina

CBF of NC Partners:

CBF

Lay Ministries

WMU of NC

Baptist Men of NC

Higher Education

Campbell University

Chowan University

Gardner-Webb University

Mars Hill College

Meredith College

Wake Forest University

Wingate University

Theological Education

Campbell Divinity

Baptist House of Duke Divinity

Gardner-Webb Divinity

Wake Forest Divinity

Social Ministries

Baptist Children's Homes

Baptist Retirement Homes

NC Baptist Hospital School of Pastoral Care

New Churches

Identity Partners

Associated Baptist Press

Baptist Center for Ethics

Baptist Foundation of NC

Baptist Joint Committee

Baptist World Alliance

Baptists Today

Biblical Recorder

Initiatives Shaping the Future of CBFNC:

- Racial Reconciliation/Diversity
- College Ministry
- Evangelism
- Hispanic Ministry
- Foundational Beliefs
- Wealth and Poverty
- Reference and Referral
- Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors

Missions Initiatives:

- NC Missions Initiative - Addressing Poverty in Our Own Backyard
- Church Planting - Anglo and other, traditional and non
- Belize - Belize Baptist Association and the Baptist Bible School of Belize
- Ukraine - Village of Hope Foster Home in Kiev
- CBF Global Missions - through the Offering for Global Missions and support of individual field personnel
- Disaster Relief - in NC and the nation
- Many additional partners who receive monetary support through the CBFNC budget

Visit www.cbfnc.org for more information.

Events and Training from CBFNC:

- Annual General Assembly
- Fellowship on the Move Regional Tour
- Spiritual Formation Retreats
- Marriage and Singles Retreats
- Staff Ministers' Retreat
- Training Events for clergy and lay leaders
- Annual Youth Retreats to the beach, to ski and to missions sites
- Annual Choir Retreats for children and youth
- Children's Missions Days
- College missional experience and retreat
- Sunday School Literature Workshops



COOPERATIVE BAPTIST
fellowship
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and



Free

Faithful

**A Curriculum for Sharing the
Story of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
with Youth and Young Adults**

Written by
Elizabeth Jones Edwards

Produced by
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina

Introduction

These materials have grown out of the recognition by the Ministry Councils and leadership of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina that we need to share the story and principles of the CBF movement with the young people in our churches. Helping youth to understand these historic Baptist principles and to become invested in the grass-roots, lay-shaped movement that is CBF is vital to the growth, and even the long-term survival, of both.

The series includes four lessons, but in most cases, it is recommended that they be used in six different sessions. Instructions for doing so are included in Lesson 1. The lessons begin with introductory and historical material that can be shared with the youth by whatever methods the leaders think appropriate for their group, depending on the ages and size of the group. Each lesson also includes Focal Scripture passages and a variety of Activities and Questions for Discussion. You will also find resource pages and supplemental materials that you may use for further study, should you choose. It is not intended that every group should do every activity. Instead, a variety of suggestions has been included so that you may choose those which will be most effective in your setting. Because the materials are designed for youth, the activities include several multi-media suggestions, including ideas for internet activities, discussions of song lyrics and movie nights.

While these lessons were written primarily with youth in mind, they may also be used for adult small groups or Sunday School classes that would like to learn more about CBF. While some adult groups may not wish to use all of the games and activities, you may find that some adults would enjoy the variety of learning experiences.

I would like to express special thanks to Dr. Pam Durso, Associate Executive Director of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, for consulting on several of the historical passages included here. I am also grateful to Linda Davis and Denise Bennett, the administrative staff at Lakeside Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, NC, for their assistance in proofreading these materials. Special thanks to Natalie Aho of CBF of North Carolina for formatting these lessons for download and to members of the Faith Development Council and CBF of NC staff for their support and their work as co-laborers in the CBF movement.

And I am grateful to the staff, congregation, and especially the youth of Lakeside Baptist Church who remind me every day what it means to be free and faithful Baptists.

Elizabeth J. Edwards
Associate Minister
Lakeside Baptist Church
Rocky Mount, NC
March 2009

Lesson 1: What Do the Words Mean?

*This Lesson is divided into three parts that may better be used as separate lessons. If your typical schedule allows for a 30-45 minute study, you should plan to do these three parts separately and choose from the “Activities and Questions for Discussion” those which best fit your time-frame and circumstances.

Part 1: Let’s Start in the Middle:

Our middle name is Baptist, but our historic Baptist identity is essential for understanding who the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is. Although many people may think the name Baptist primarily identifies us by our practice of believers’ baptism by immersion,¹ our mode of baptism is only part of what designates us as Baptist.

The most important of these determinations is that we affirm the Lordship of Christ, meaning that we look to the life of Christ as the example after which we pattern our life of faith and to the death and resurrection of Christ as the act in which God offered redemption for us and all of creation. Faith in Christ is central to our understanding of every other aspect of what it means to be Baptist.

The historical movement with which we most closely identify is one begun in England in the early 1600’s by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, two ministers who, frustrated with the practices of the Church of England, aligned themselves with the Separatists and sought reform. While Baptist doctrine has always maintained strong connections with the theological foundations of the early church fathers and mothers, early Baptists also relied heavily on Protestant Reformers for ideas about church practices. Influenced by Martin Luther’s notion of the priesthood of the believer, and the Anabaptist views of believer’s baptism, local church autonomy, separation of church and state, and non-creedalism (*each of these ideas will be developed in later chapters*), Smyth and Helwys left England because of the threat of persecution and led a small group of brave, like-minded believers to Amsterdam. In 1609, Smyth baptized himself, and then the rest of the group. They believed that since the Church of England was a false church, their earlier baptisms were invalid and that baptism should be reserved for those who made a public confession of faith. Although the two would later part ways, and Helwys would eventually be arrested for his heretical teachings and die in prison, the movement was born, and future Baptists would continue to fight for the freedom of individuals, local congregations and all religious people.²

Once Europeans began traveling across the Atlantic Ocean, it didn’t take long for the Baptist movement to take hold in the New World. In 1638, Roger Williams helped to found the First Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, the only one of the thirteen original colonies to observe complete religious freedom for its citizens. The fiery preaching of the revivals of the Great Awakenings in the mid 1700’s and early 1800’s would expand the size and influence of evangelical groups, including Baptists, especially in the southern United States. But the ideals of Smyth and Helwys would remain the guiding principles of free and faithful Baptists everywhere.

1 Some groups may have a firm grasp on the concept of believers’ baptism by immersion and may not need further explanation. Simply put, it is the practice of baptizing those who have made a public confession of faith in Jesus, with the assumption that those persons have reached an age suitable for understanding such a commitment. Immersion refers to the mode of baptism where the person is completely submerged in water. Although almost all Baptists practice believers’ baptism by immersion, some congregations accept as valid those who have been baptized by other means. If your group has questions about your congregation’s teachings on baptism, you may want to invite your pastor to lead such a discussion with you. For a more complete understanding of the biblical and historical foundations of baptism in the Baptist tradition, see R. Wayne Stacy’s article on baptism in *A Baptist’s Theology*, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1999.

2 H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*. 1987.

Even with splits among U.S. Baptists, first between North and South prior to the American Civil War, and then between moderates and conservatives in the South beginning in the 1980's, many Baptists have attempted to keep these historic Baptist principles alive.³ The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was formed in the early 1990's out of a convergence of these traditions, and the movement called CBF still strives to remain, at its heart, true to its Baptist heritage.⁴

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship affirms these Baptist Principles as part of our core values:

***Soul Freedom** - We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We affirm the freedom and responsibility of every person to relate directly to God without the imposition of creed or the control of clergy or government.

***Bible Freedom** - We believe in the authority of Scripture. We believe the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, is central to the life of the individual and the church. We affirm the freedom and right of every Christian to interpret and apply scripture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

***Church Freedom** - We believe in the autonomy of every local church. We believe Baptist churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate as they deem appropriate in the larger Body of Christ.

***Religious Freedom** - We believe in the freedom of religion, freedom for religion, and freedom from religion. We support the separation of church and state.

3 These events are described in "CBF 101: An Introduction to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," written by Dr. Larry Hovis, Executive Coordinator of CBF of North Carolina, an excerpt of which can be found on page 11. For a more detailed treatment of these events, see Walter B. Shurden's *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, Mercer University Press, 1993.

4 If your group is interested in learning more about the beliefs and practices of other denominations, you might consider having representatives from various churches come to share information with your group. One resource for information on a variety of religious groups, both Christian and non-Christian, is a workbook published by Abingdon Press called *To the Point - Religions: Encountering People of Other Faiths*. It is available from Cokesbury. Although it was published in 1995 and some of the data is outdated, it is a great resource for introducing youth to other faith traditions.

Part 2: Why *Cooperative Baptists*?⁵

As much as Baptists are built on principles of autonomy and freedom, we recognize the importance of cooperating to achieve shared goals. We cooperate voluntarily as individuals, congregations and institutions who share a similar view of what it means to be Baptist. We believe that by uniting our efforts and resources, we can accomplish more together than we ever could alone.

We work together to send missionaries and support missions causes, both Baptist and ecumenical, which meet human need while sharing the love and Good News of Jesus Christ. All of us are called to be co-laborers in the task of fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission. We want to enable believers and churches to work cooperatively with other Great Commission Christians to activate this global missions calling in their communities and throughout the world.

We believe the Bible teaches that. . .

- *God is the one triune God, Creator of all people in God's own image.
- *All people are separated from God by sin.
- *Christ is the Savior and Redeemer for all peoples.
- *The Holy Spirit convicts and converts all who believe in Christ, teaches the church in the voice of the Living Christ, and empowers the church and all believers for the mission of Christ in the world.
- *Christ calls us to minister redemptively to the spiritual, physical and social needs of individuals and communities.
- *Every believer and every church is responsible for sharing the Gospel with all people.

Instead of owning and controlling institutions, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship seeks to discover other organizations that can provide resources for congregations and partner with them in mutually beneficial ways. This partnership model includes support of identity partners, independent agencies and institutions, which we believe to be working to preserve and promote Baptist principles. These partners include:

- *Baptist World Alliance (www.bwanet.org)
- *Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (www.bjcra.org)
- *Baptist Center for Ethics (www.ethicsdaily.com)
- *Christian Churches Together (www.christianchurchestogether.org)
- *Bread for the World (www.bread.org)
- *Associated Baptist Press (www.abpnews.com)
- **Baptists Today* (www.baptiststoday.org)

5 Much of the material for this section is taken from the website for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: www.thefellowship.info.

The partnership model also goes hand in hand with CBF's commitment to lifelong learning for laity and clergy. We are committed to Baptist theological education that affords intellectual and spiritual freedom to both students and professors in an atmosphere of reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship. We cooperate to provide theological education through support of independent colleges, universities, seminaries and divinity schools, in order to prepare Baptist leaders for service in our churches and the world. These schools include:

- *Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
- *Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, VA
- *Baptist University of the Americas, San Antonio, TX
- *Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Forth Worth, TX
- *Campbell University Divinity School, Buies Creek, NC
- *Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Atlanta, GA
- *Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee, KS
- *Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC
- *George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX
- *International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic
- *Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin Simmons University, Abilene, TX
- *Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC
- *M. Christopher White School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC
- *McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, Atlanta, GA
- *Wake Forest University Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC

Part 3: Why A Fellowship?

Out of our shared Baptist principles and our united efforts, our fellowship grows. The word “fellowship” is one translation of the Greek word *koinonia* (also translated community), which indicates an affection for one another. We are kindred spirits who work together to accomplish our shared purposes, but ours is not a business partnership. It is less of a contract and more of a covenant. It is not coerced and few restrictions apply: We ask only that those in the Fellowship be “Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.”⁶

This association is voluntary. Churches and individuals may participate at whatever level of involvement they choose and are free to partner with whatever other institutions and organizations they choose.

But how are we different from other denominations or conventions? Although we realize that more and more moderate Baptists claim CBF as their primary denominational identity, we have resisted traditional denominational structures with all their trappings. As mentioned in the previous section, we do not own schools or buildings or institutions. We do not require binding commitments to any organizational documents or positions. And we attempt to avoid much of the bureaucracy and control of more institutionalized denominations. Ours is a grass-roots movement of Baptists, guided by a group of elected leaders and supported by individuals and churches from across the country. Our leadership and membership are as diverse as Baptists themselves: moderate and conservative, lay and clergy, male and female, urban and rural, liturgical and contemporary, representing a variety of races, regions and theological persuasions. We seek to partner with any Great Commission Christians who affirm the Lordship of Christ and the Baptist principles upon which we are built.

But with freedom and diversity come certain risks. We celebrate that our diversity often creates differences of opinion and practice. We encourage these many voices to contribute to decisions that are made and to the vision of our movement. While this model may not be as efficient as others, we believe it affirms our Baptist ideals of freedom and reflects the rich diversity of the larger Body of Christ.

6 Quoted from Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s Identity Statement

Lesson 1: What Do the Words Mean?

Focal Scriptures:

Colossians 3:12-17; Mark 1:16-20; Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

****Why are you Baptist? Because your parents are? Because it's the closest church to your house? Because your church has the coolest youth group in town? All of these may be legitimate reasons that you are part of a Baptist church, but what defines the Baptist movement is much more. Discuss what defines what it means to be Baptist and what distinguishes us from other Christian denominations.**

****Have the youth investigate the websites for the CBF identity partners. A list of these websites is included with the background materials for this lesson. If internet access is not available, request brochures or newsletters from these organizations for the youth to examine. If you have a large group, break them up into smaller groups to research the various partners. Based on what they find, have youth report on the mission statements, values and core beliefs of these various groups. How do these organizations reflect the mission and values of CBF?**

****Discuss how a fellowship is different from a convention or denomination. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? How does the fellowship model reflect our Baptist principles?**

****Read Colossians 3:12-17. What does the passage say to us about the importance of cooperation and fellowship? What does Paul say are the things that bind a fellowship together? Why were these things important for the early church? Why are they important for us?**

****For the following activity, you will need a ball of yarn or spool of sturdy string and a ball (such as a kickball or light-weight child's ball).**

Have the youth form a circle in a large, open space. This activity works best with at least six people. The more people you have, the better the visual demonstration; however, if you have more than 25-30 people, you may want to break them up into smaller groups.

Hold the end of the yarn and toss the ball to someone else in the circle but not the person next to you. Have each person hold onto the yarn and throw the ball to someone else until everyone has received the yarn and a "web" is formed. Ask the youth what it looks like—a web, a net? Why is it important to cooperate? What would happen if we tried to balance the ball on a single strand of yarn? How much weight could one strand hold? Throw the ball onto the web of yarn. Try to roll or bounce the ball around. What happens?

When we are all connected by the yarn, it forms a network, a safety net of cooperation. It can hold the ball and support much more weight. The more people in the circle, the more tightly we are woven together and the more effective we can be. How does this demonstration relate to CBF's ideas about partnership and cooperation? How does our working together make us stronger and more effective? Can you think of other symbols that represent cooperation?

****Read Mark 1:16-20. How is the symbol of a net important in this story? How does it relate to CBF's understanding of partnership? Of missions? In what ways are we, like the disciples, called to leave our way of life and follow Christ?**

Closing Prayer:

God, we thank you for the community of faith with which we pray: for the differences among us by which we are enriched and through which the Spirit prompts us to grow; your amazing grace that forgives and restores us; new insights from ancient, holy words; traditions of the church that still give us meaning today; hymns and prayers that pour out of our hearts into yours; Christian friends who perceive our strengths when we cannot; words of encouragement, affection and trust; shared laughter, healing of wounds, and hope shining in the darkness. For all these things, we give you our deepest gratitude. Amen.⁷

⁷ Sharlande Sledge. *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing. 1999. p. 98.

Resource Pages - Lesson 1

CBF 101: An Introduction to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

By Larry Hovis, Executive Coordinator, *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina*

In college courses, “101” usually refers to basic, foundational, or introductory subject matter. In these days of great change in Baptist life, many members of Baptist churches are seeking to learn more about Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). The purpose of this document is to help with this educational process.

Background

Beginning in 1979, a concerted effort was undertaken to bring about a drastic change in the leadership and direction of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This effort was accomplished through a well-organized political process that involved electing a convention president who would make appointments that eventually resulted in placing persons on boards of trustees of agencies and institutions who would carry out the desired changes. Control of boards of trustees was accomplished in about twelve years, along with replacing the administrations, and eventually, most employees of the agencies and institutions. Great attention was given to altering the character and culture of the seminaries and mission boards. Those who supported these changes labeled this process, “The Conservative Resurgence.” Those who opposed these changes referred to the process as, “The Fundamentalist Takeover.” Regardless of one’s approval or disapproval of the changes, all agreed that by 1991, the SBC had undergone a major transformation.

That year, a group gathered in Atlanta representing active Southern Baptists who were displeased with the new direction of the SBC. This group formed a new body which was incorporated under Georgia law as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The focus of CBF in those early days was to provide a place of fellowship for people who felt disenfranchised from the SBC and a funding channel for missionaries and new theological schools that were beginning to be birthed.

Today, CBF has grown far beyond its humble beginnings. Though many of the churches and individuals who partner together through CBF still have a connection to the SBC, CBF is recognized as a separate body, as evidenced by its recent admission as a member of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), an organization of over two hundred international Baptist bodies. (The SBC has subsequently withdrawn from the BWA.)

Baptist Principles: A Firm Foundation

CBF adherents have always placed a high premium on what are commonly referred to as “historic Baptist principles.” In fact, disagreement over the interpretation of these principles, and how they are applied in local churches and in denominational life, has been at the heart of the controversy in the SBC. CBF’s understanding of basic Christian and Baptist principles are reflected in its official documents and strategic plan.

- Our Identity – “We are a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.”
- Our Vision – “Being the presence of Christ in the world.”
- Our Mission – “Serving Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission.”
- Our Core Values
 - Baptist Principles
 - Soul Freedom – We believe in the priesthood of all believers and the equality of every church member.
 - Bible Freedom – We believe in the authority of Scripture under the Lordship of Christ without the imposition of creedal statements.
 - Church Freedom – We believe in the autonomy of every local church and affirm every church’s right to determine its faith, practice and leadership without outside interference.
 - Religious Freedom – We believe in full religious liberty and the separation of church and state.
 - Biblically-based Global missions – This includes belief in the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); the sinfulness of all humankind; Christ as Savior and Redeemer for all peoples; the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and empower believers; the responsibility of every believer and church to share the Gospel; the need to cooperate with others in mission to the world.
 - Resource Model
 - Justice and Reconciliation

- Lifelong Learning and Ministry
- Trustworthiness
- Effectiveness

CBF Ministries

Current CBF ministries fall into four areas or “strategic initiatives”:

- Faith Formation – Assisting congregations with evangelism, outreach and spiritual growth.
- Building Community – Encouraging congregational health, Baptist identity, reconciliation and justice, marriage and family ministries, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and endorsing chaplains and pastoral counselors.
- Leadership Development – In congregations, through theological education (in partnership with seminaries and divinity schools) and in collegiate ministry.
- Global Missions and Ministries – Through partnership missions with local churches, reaching the most neglected peoples of the world and planting new churches (over one-half of our resources are spent on Global Missions and Ministries).

A Paradigm Shift: From Convention to Partnership

Most lifelong Southern Baptist adults were nurtured in a “convention culture” in which congregations, district associations, state conventions and the national convention were closely connected through money (which flowed from congregations to associations and state conventions to the national convention) and programs (which flowed from the national convention to state conventions and associations to congregations). Theoretically, we exercised autonomy at every level, but in practice, we functioned as an organizational pyramid with congregations forming the base and the national convention sitting at the apex.

Alternatively, CBF promotes a “partnership paradigm” in which congregations are at the center of Baptist life. Congregations are encouraged to determine their unique, God-given mission and then choose partners to assist them in accomplishing that mission. CBF does not demand exclusive loyalty but humbly asks for the opportunity to be one (hopefully a significant one) of a congregation’s many missional partners.

The CBF Movement: National and State Fellowships

In addition to CBF, which has its offices in Atlanta, there are eighteen autonomous state and regional CBF-related bodies. These bodies work very closely with CBF but are not franchises or field offices. CBF Executive Coordinator Daniel Vestal calls this unique relationship between national and state CBF bodies “a seamless movement.”

CBF of North Carolina (CBFNC) is funded and organized separately from CBF. We seek to be the face of CBF in North Carolina by promoting CBF ministries in our state. We also have our own ministries which include multiple mission projects; support for theological education; retreats for youth, children and adults; and a reference and referral service to help churches seeking staff and ministers seeking ministry placement find each other. We extend the partnership paradigm in North Carolina by offering a *Mission Resource Plan* which allows churches to support historic North Carolina Baptist ministries through CBFNC. We have our own paid staff, elected leadership, annual general assembly, and many events throughout the year. Our mission is “Bringing Baptists of North Carolina together for Christ-centered ministry.”

Getting Connected

CBF, at both the state and national levels, is not a member organization, but a fellowship of churches and individuals who voluntarily cooperate to do together what we could never accomplish alone, for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Please attend one of our assemblies, participate in one of our ministries, or call on one of our staff members or volunteer leaders for information or assistance. If you embrace our mission, vision and values, and desire to share in our ministries, you are welcome in our fellowship. Of course, your financial gifts are most welcome, too. May God bless and guide us as we seek to be the presence of Christ in the world, together.

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Larry Hovis, Executive Coordinator (LHovis@cbfnc.org)

Lesson 2: Sweet Freedom

Freedom is important for life and faith. Inherent in the concept of freedom is an affirmation of human dignity. It implies empowerment and self-determination, a recognition that human beings are capable of being trustworthy to think and make decisions for themselves. While our Christian faith teaches us that we all have the capacity for great sin and evil, we also believe that we, each and all, are created in God's image and are unique and gifted and loved by God.

God's gift of freedom to us is an expression of God's great love for us. The Protestant Reformers believed strongly that matters of faith were matters of individual conscience and could not be forced or coerced either by church or civil authorities. In his book *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, Walter Shurden has said, "[Jesus] invited personal response based on voluntary commitment."¹ From the beginning, Baptists have embraced the freedoms granted by God and defended those freedoms for others.

In Lesson 1, we discussed the Baptist principles upon which the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was built. Each of these principles affirms the freedoms that we cherish for ourselves, our churches and others. Three of these principles have to do with how we relate to God and to one another within the church:

*Soul Freedom - We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We affirm the freedom and responsibility of every person to relate directly to God without the imposition of creed or the control of clergy or government.

*Bible Freedom - We believe in the authority of Scripture. We believe the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, is central to the life of the individual and the church. We affirm the freedom and right of every Christian to interpret and apply scripture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

*Church Freedom - We believe in the autonomy of every local church. We believe Baptist churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, and to participate as they deem appropriate in the larger Body of Christ.

Freedom to Be God's Child

Central to our understanding of faith is our belief that as children of God, we are free to relate to and talk to God, to worship and to live out our faith as we believe God has called us to do. We call that freedom the priesthood of all believers. This doctrine, as understood by Martin Luther² and other Protestant reformers, teaches that individuals do not need a human mediator, such as clergy or creed, in order to pray, confess, worship or serve. We can each relate to God as we are led by the Holy Spirit to do. This belief emphasizes that each soul is competent to stand before God, to bring its petitions to God and to receive God's grace.

While some churches require confession and certain prayers or other acts of worship to be done through a priest or other clergy, and then for those clergy to impose a certain penance in order for the person to be restored to a right relationship with the church and with God, Baptists believe that Christ is the only mediator we need and that we pray directly to him and through him in order to relate to God. While most Baptist churches understand that it is important to have educated, trained clergy in order to provide worship and organizational leadership, pastoral care and guidance for the congregation, we do not hold that ordained clergy necessarily have any more special relationship with God than anyone else. While clergy have been called out by God for specific ministries, each baptized Christian is a minister with the same freedoms and responsibilities to God and the Church.

The belief that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ goes hand in hand with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. We believe that it is not through a particular intervention of the Church or clergy that we are saved. Nor is our salvation secured by any works or good deeds that we might do. While Baptists and other Protestants affirm the importance of the Church for living out the life of faith in community and the central role that good works play in the demonstration of our faith, we believe that our salvation is secured only by the redemptive work of Christ on our behalf. We are reconciled to God by placing our faith in the Christ who came as the incarnation of God's grace for us.

1 Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993, 25.

2 Martin Luther. *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520).

Freedom to Read God's Word

Related to our belief in soul freedom is our belief in Bible freedom. Baptists have long taught that individuals have the right and responsibility to read and interpret Scripture for themselves. Baptists typically hold a high view of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, the written account of God's activity in human history. Our Bible includes both the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament (writings of the early Church), and both are used in the context of worship and Bible study. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and within the context of a faith community that will hold them accountable, each Christian is given the freedom to read God's word, to interpret its meaning, and to apply it to their life of faith.

Associated with an understanding of soul freedom and Bible freedom is an emphasis on non-creedalism. The word creed comes from the Latin word "credo," meaning "I believe." Creeds were first developed by the church councils, where leaders such as bishops and cardinals met in the early years of the Church to make decisions about the teachings and practices of the Church. Creeds were used to summarize the accepted beliefs of the Church and to denounce heresies (false teachings) that arose. For centuries, creeds such as the Nicene Creed and Apostle's Creed helped to influence the direction of the teachings of the Church. They were also helpful in a time when printed versions of the Bible were rare and few people were literate because they could be easily memorized and recited in worship.

During the Middle Ages, corruption within church leadership caused some to begin to use the creeds to oppress and persecute people who disagreed with them. During these times, there was little or no concept of religious freedom. Most governments supported an official church with which everyone in the country was required to identify, and many clergy had great power to decide whether someone's faith practices were acceptable or not. Some of those in leadership feared that new ideas and interpretations of Scripture would threaten their power to control the thought and practice of the Church. In some instances, people were even tortured or burned at the stake for refusing to affirm a certain creed. Especially after the invention of the print press, around the year 1450, the Bible became much more accessible, and more people were able to read and interpret Scripture for themselves. During the early years of the Protestant Reformation, Baptists were among those who rejected the use of creeds for forcing people to prove their orthodoxy (right belief). Baptist Reformers said that our only creed should be the Bible itself, believing that a creed was only someone else's interpretation of what is contained in Scripture. Baptists thought that each Christian should be able to follow their own conscience in interpreting Scripture, even if that meant differences of opinion, without the imposition of creeds by the Church hierarchy.

In his book *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, Walter Shurden has said, "Historically, Baptists have resisted any and all creeds. And they have for two very good reasons. First, no one doctrinal statement can summarize adequately the biblical mandate for behavior and belief. It is better, therefore, to stay with the Bible alone. Second, Baptists have feared creeds because of the seemingly inevitable tendency to make the creed the *norm* and to *force* compliance to the creed."³

Some Baptist congregations choose to use one of the more widely accepted creeds as an affirmation of faith (especially the Apostle's Creed), and some groups have written their own affirmations. An affirmation of faith, sometimes called a confession, allows us to state the tenants of our faith succinctly but is not binding. No one is required to swear allegiance to or sign a certain creed for participation in the church, and a variety of affirmations of faith may be used to verbalize what we believe, to unite us in worship as a community of faith, and to witness to others of our faith in Christ.

Freedom to Be the Church

Another component of freedom for Baptists is church freedom. Baptists practice a congregational polity (church governance), which says that each local congregation is an autonomous body of voluntarily affiliated members. Each congregation can decide for itself, most often by a democratic process, issues such as how it will organize, whom it will ordain for ministry and place in leadership, what its worship style will be, what doctrinal or social positions it will take, in what missions and ministries it will participate, with whom it will affiliate and any number of other decisions that are made

3 Shurden, 14.

within the church.

Local church autonomy means that some Baptist churches will have contemporary worship, some will have traditional Baptist worship and others will choose liturgical worship. It means that some congregations will have women as deacons or ministers and others will not. It means that each church can decide by what method it will elect deacons, officers and committees. It means that one congregation may affiliate with a local association, a state convention, a national organization, any combination of these or none at all. The belief in and practice of local church autonomy affirms that if each individual Christian is competent to relate to God as he or she is led by the Holy Spirit, then any given community of such believers is also competent to make these decisions.

Each individual or congregation affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship does so voluntarily and may or may not choose to affiliate with our other partner organizations. Association with CBF does not require any doctrinal allegiance other than affirmation of the Lordship of Christ or any particular denominational affiliation other than identification as a Baptist Christian.

Risky Business

Some may read about these freedoms and react with alarm or fear. Surely giving people this much freedom and allowing for this much difference is risky! Indeed, it is, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship believes it is worth the risk. God loves us enough to grant us this kind of freedom because the inherent worth and dignity of each person created in God's image requires it. God gives us this freedom because God understands that faith or devotion that is coerced is not sincere but that faith in Christ is best lived out without externally imposed restraints but through personal conviction and commitment. In order for faith to be genuine it must be free to be experienced, explored and practiced by the individual as he or she responds to the call of God and the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 2: Sweet Freedom

Focal Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 1:4b-6; Galatians 5:1, 13

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

*Have youth take turns reading the Focal Scriptures from 1 Peter, Revelation and Galatians. What do they have to say about freedom? About responsibility? How are the two related? Does freedom mean that anything goes? Why do Baptists believe that freedom is so important?

*Have someone read the passage from Ephesians. What does this passage say about the nature of our fellowship within the church? What does it say about unity and diversity within the Christian community? Why do you think God calls people with many different gifts together? What are the opportunities and the challenges created by these differences?

*Creeds and Affirmations:

1. Give each youth a copy of the Apostle's Creed and Nicene Creed found on page 18. How are they similar? Different? Does anyone in the class have either of these memorized. If so, does the version you know differ from the one printed here?
2. Why were the creeds important to the early Church? Why might church leaders be tempted to use devices such as creeds to punish people with different opinions? Can you think of other examples from history or today where religion has been used to control people's thoughts and opinions?
3. Does your church use any kind of confession or affirmation of faith in worship? What other parts of worship and church life might serve as a creed, stating what we believe? Hymns? Prayers? Actions?

*Have each youth write their own Credo or Affirmation of Faith. Encourage them to be as concise as possible. It may help to give them a limit, such as five sentences or fewer, so that they have to consider the points of their faith that are most significant for them. Give the group a few minutes to write down their ideas or have them prepare this ahead of time to bring with them. Have those who are willing read theirs to the group. Are they struck by how similar or how different they are? How would they feel if they were forced to declare allegiance to someone else's beliefs?

*For high school youth or young adults: A discussion of theories of justification will be a bit too much for most youth, but you can have older youth discuss what some passages of Scripture say about salvation. Have the youth read Romans 3:21-24, Galatians 2:16, and James 2:14-16. What does it mean that we are saved by grace and not works? What is the role of good works in our life of faith?

*Schedule a movie night for your group to watch *Wide Awake* (1998, starring Denis Leary, Dana Delaney, Joseph Cross and Rosie O'Donnell. You can find it inexpensively online.) *You can consult www.kids-in-mind.com or www.screenit.com to check content for this and many other movies.* *Wide Awake* is the story of a boy named Josh who embarks on a year-long journey of looking for God. It is a good movie with serious theological considerations for youth as well as plenty of humorous moments. His questions and experiences may provide good materials for discussion about our having the freedom to discover faith for ourselves and how we receive and discern God's revelation.

*This discussion about freedom may also lead your group to a further discussion about the responsibilities that accompany that freedom. While we will take up some of these issues in Session 4 when we discuss missions, if questions arise here, it might be appropriate to pursue them while there is interest. A movie suggestion that may be helpful in exploring these issues of individual responsibility and how one person's willingness to stand up for what they believe in can make a difference is *Amazing Grace* (2006), based on the true story of William Wilberforce (Ioan Gruffudd) who embarks on a courageous quest to end the British slave trade.

Closing Prayer:

Ever-present God, stir in our hearts a holy expectancy so that we will be ready and open to hear your voice. May our spirit be open to the calling of your Spirit, that in listening for you we might hear you, that in waiting for you we might meet you, that in meeting you we might follow you. Amen.⁴

⁴ Peggy Haymes. *Be Thou Present: Prayers, Litanies, and Hymns for Christian Worship*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing. 1994. pp. 10-11.

Resource Pages

Lesson 2

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into Hell; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Lesson 3: Free to Be

Picture this: You and your family are attending worship one Sunday morning. As the service ends and people start to file out of the sanctuary, you hear a commotion outside. As you exit, you can see men in uniforms carrying guns. They are yelling questions and insults, intimidating the worshippers, members of your church family whom you have known all your life. As the church members try to answer the questions, the soldiers begin to handcuff them and take them to jail, without any explanation, without any information. In the days to come, other church members have trouble conducting business. Neighbors won't be seen talking to them. Their children are excluded at school. Church members find themselves ignored, discriminated against, shunned throughout the community.

Sound far-fetched? Hard to believe? For those of us who live in a country where we enjoy complete freedom to believe and to worship however we choose, a scene like this is almost impossible to fathom. But in many parts of the world, Christians regularly face these kinds of challenges, being harassed and persecuted simply for worshiping, carrying a Bible, praying, or expressing their faith in any way. Religious liberty is something we take for granted. It is something that many people in the world continue to fight for and to long for.

As Baptists we celebrate our own freedom to believe, worship, study, fellowship and govern ourselves as we are led by the Holy Spirit to do, but another important part of that freedom is honoring and protecting those same freedoms for others. The 19th-century British philosopher Herbert Spencer said, "No one can be perfectly free till all are free."¹ Historically, our understanding of this kind of freedom as it applies to religion has had two emphases:

1. Religious Liberty:

Every human being has the right to follow his or her own conscience in matters of religion. What you believe and how you choose to put that faith into practice is not something that can be coerced by any church or government authority, by any group or individual. Baptists have long held that religious liberty is a precious gift, something to be preserved and protected for all. And we have long understood that as long as there is anyone whose religious liberty is denied or threatened, ours may also be in jeopardy. Such liberty is not only for those who are in the majority or those who agree with the prevailing opinions. In order for it to be secure for any of us, the freedom to believe and worship as we choose, as well as the freedom not to believe or worship at all, must be defended for everyone.

And when Baptists talk about freedom, we mean complete freedom. Walter Shurden writes, "Freedom of religion represents a commitment to complete religious liberty and not simply religious toleration. Religious liberty and religious toleration are not the same. Religious toleration is concession; religious liberty is a right. Religious toleration is a measure of expediency; religious liberty is a matter of principle."²

As we learned in Lesson 1, the first Baptists sought freedom from persecution in England by fleeing to Amsterdam, where religious diversity was tolerated. Baptists also helped to establish religious liberty in the New World. In 1636, Roger Williams, an English Separatist, helped to establish a settlement at Providence, which would later become part of the colony of Rhode Island. Williams was led by the principle that "God requireth not an uniformity of religion" and made certain that all people and religious groups would enjoy what he called "soul liberty."³ Williams was one of about a dozen people who helped to found the first Baptist church in the New World in 1639, and when he became governor of Rhode Island, he insisted that the colony's charter guarantee, for the first time in American history, complete religious liberty for all who would settle there.

1 Herbert Spencer. *Social Statics*, part IV, chapter 30.

2 Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993, 49.

3 *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, Edited by Bill J. Leonard. InterVarsity Press, 1994, p. 289.

2. Separation of Church and State:

Another principle that has been championed by Baptists and that has helped to describe what we believe to be the appropriate relationship to government is called separation of church and state. U.S. founders Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and Baptist leaders like John Leland worked to establish protection for religious liberty in this young nation. Baptists were among those who insisted that our nation's Constitution include a Bill of Rights which would enumerate those rights believed to be given by God and protected by law, including freedom of religion. Despite its frequent usage in modern dialogue, the phrase from Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, "a wall of separation between church and state," appears nowhere in the official documents of our country's founding. What we do find is the First Amendment to the Constitution which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." Later was added the Fourteenth Amendment, extending this requirement to all state governments. Disagreement over the interpretation of this Constitutional provision continues to this day.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship identifies religious liberty and separation of church and state among its core values. Its partnership with Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty has been important for CBF since its beginnings. The mission of the Baptist Joint Committee is "to defend and extend God-given religious liberty for all, furthering the Baptist heritage that champions the principle that religion must be freely exercised, neither advanced nor inhibited by government."⁴ To learn more about the work of Baptist Joint Committee, visit its website at www.bjconline.org.

4 Quoted from the website of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, www.bjconline.org.

Lesson 3: Free to Be

Focal Scriptures:

John 8:31-32; Matthew 22:15-22

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

*Discuss the quote about freedom by Herbert Spencer. Do you agree or disagree with his statement?

*Why is it important for us to support religious freedom, even when it may mean supporting someone's right to do or believe something with which we disagree?

*Do you agree with Walter Shurden that religious liberty and religious toleration are not the same? How are they different? Why is religious toleration not enough?

*Bring with you or have the youth research, from the internet, magazines and newspapers, articles about religious liberty issues. Look especially for stories about religious persecution around the world, Supreme Court decisions dealing with religious issues; any kind of government influence or interference in religion. Have the youth read and discuss these articles. Some recent events or issues you may wish to discuss include the FLDS charges of polygamy and child abuse; Muslim restrictions on women (requirement to wear head coverings, honor killings, etc.); prayer in public schools; government funding of faith-based charities; references to God in the pledge of allegiance and on currency. You may want to check the website for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty for the most recent issues and court cases.

*What are some of the negative results of a lack of or limitations on religious freedom? How can a lack of religious liberty lead to oppression or abuses in other areas of life? Political, social, economic, etc? Should there be any limits on religious liberty? If so, what?

*Would religious liberty mean more to you if you were a member of a minority religion in the U.S. or a Christian in a non-Christian nation? You may consider having someone who practices a minority religion come to talk with your group about their appreciation of religious liberty.

*Discuss the importance of the four freedoms named in the Baptist principles. Why have these been important for Baptist history? What has this history contributed to ideas about religion in our nation and world? How do you see these freedoms at work in your own congregation?

*The following activity will more easily be done in a larger open space.

Ask for at least four volunteers. The rest of your group will serve as observers and reporters. On each volunteer, place some physical limitation: blindfold one person, bind the feet of one person and the hands of another, etc. Have one additional volunteer on which you place no limitations. Ask each volunteer to complete a simple task such as stacking books or placing small items in a box or basket. Depending on the space available, you could have them do this simultaneously or take turns.

Ask the rest of the group to observe the volunteers and to discuss how their performance of the task was affected by the limitations placed on them. The person who is completely free to move around should be able to complete the task easily. The others will experience varying degrees of difficulty depending on the limitation imposed.

How is this exercise a metaphor for the importance of religious freedom? How might the practice of your faith be affected if you were not free to follow your conscience and to believe and practice as you choose?

*Read and discuss the focal Scriptures.

Consider Matthew 22:15-22. How did Jesus understand the proper relationship between religion and government? As a follower of Jesus, what is your responsibility to participate in the larger society?

Look at John 8:31-32. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “the truth will set you free”? Are there different types of freedom? If so, what? What type was Jesus talking about? Why do you think Jesus placed such a high value on freedom?

Closing Prayer:

God of all creation and Lord of all life, you have created each of us to be unique and special yet all in your image, and you have breathed into us your life-giving Spirit. May your Spirit blow among us now as a wind of change, that we may love and respect all of your children, regardless of our differences, and that we may seek peace and reconciliation in a world so determined to promote hatred and division. Transform our hearts and minds, that in all things we might seek your righteousness. In the name of the One who revealed your righteousness to us, even Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Lesson 4: Go Into All the World

On June 17, 1812, Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Calcutta, India. At the age of 25, he had been commissioned as the first Protestant missionary sent from North America. The Judsons were originally commissioned by the Congregational Church, but during their voyage, after a detailed study of Matthew 28:19-20, they became convinced that believer's baptism was theologically valid and should be practiced in obedience to the command of Jesus. After arriving in India, the Judsons were baptized by immersion and affiliated with the American Baptist Missionary Union and then began what would be a nearly forty-year career in Burma (now called Myanmar). Thus began the long and storied development of the movement of Baptist missionaries from North America into all the world. Over the next two centuries, tens of thousands of missionaries and hundreds of millions of dollars would be sent into every corner of the globe in order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Missions has always been at the heartbeat of what it means to be Baptist. And missions has been central to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship movement from its beginnings. Field personnel and volunteers, individuals and congregations work together to share the love of Christ and help CBF to fulfill its mission: to serve Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given purpose.

Biblically-based Global Missions

All of us are called to be co-laborers in the task of fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission. We believe the Bible teaches that:

- *God is the one triune God, Creator of all people in God's own image
- *All people are separated from God by sin
- *Christ is the Savior and Redeemer for all peoples
- *The Holy Spirit convicts and converts all who believe in Christ, teaches the church in the voice of the Living Christ, and empowers the church and all believers in the mission of Christ in the world.
- *Christ calls us to minister redemptively to the spiritual, physical and social needs of individuals and communities
- *Every believer and every church is responsible for sharing the Gospel with all people. We want to enable believers and churches to work cooperatively with other Great Commission Christians to activate this global missions calling in their communities and throughout the world.¹

As CBF Baptists, we proudly claim the name of Great Commission Christians (Matthew 28:18-20). We are on mission because God is on mission and has invited us to participate in that work. We also believe that in our work, we are called to live out the Great Commandment (Mark 12:29-31). Jesus said that the most important things we can do in our life of faith is to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. God's mission, and therefore our mission as God's children, is redemption and reconciliation for all people and ultimately for all of creation. The Good News that we share is that God in Christ offers compassion for the here and now and hope for eternal life.

CBF missions seeks to demonstrate the Incarnation of Christ (Christ's coming in human flesh). The Incarnation is witness to God's great love for us. Scripture is clear that, like Christ, we are both body and spirit. Whether we say we are embodied spirits or spirit-filled bodies, we cannot separate the two. At creation, God formed us from dust in God's own image and enlivened us with the breath of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 2:7). In our redemption, the Word of God became human flesh in order to save us (John 1:1-9), and when Christ returns we will be like him (1 John 3:1-2). That means for us that if we are to participate fully in God's mission of loving and redeeming humanity, we are called to nurture both the body and the spirit.

So, our mission is not just about meeting people's physical needs and it is not just about sharing the message that if we confess our sins and profess Christ as Lord we will be saved – it is both, and the two cannot be separated!

¹ From CBF's statement "Who Are We: What Fellowship People Do."

CBF uses the name “Global Missions” in order to indicate that our work is worldwide. As our world has become increasingly interdependent and people of all languages, cultures and colors can now be found living around the world, we no longer think of missions as being divided into categories of work we do at home and abroad. Through our mission efforts we seek to embrace the world and cross all kinds of borders of nation, language and tradition. CBF missions seeks to participate in God’s mission through several means:

- *Serving the most neglected and unreached people groups with short-term and long-term field personnel
- *Recognizing a world without borders where we do not work only within national political borders but minister to people groups wherever they live
- *Partnering with other Great Commission Christians in our missions efforts (See our list of partners in Lesson 1.)
- *Working to promote the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) of addressing extreme hunger and poverty issues around the world.²

Our missions initiatives include:³

- *Together for Hope, the Fellowship’s rural poverty initiative
- *New Church Starts
- *Disaster Response in the United States and around the world
- *Communities of Missional Practice where groups of Christians and/or churches who share a passion for a particular area of ministry meet together to discuss and share ideas. Some of the communities related to CBF are: Poverty/Transformation Ministries; Disaster Response Ministry; Internationals Ministries; Church Starting/Faith Sharing; Justice and Peacemaking Ministries; Medical Ministries; Education/Economic Development Ministries.

CBF Global Missions partners with churches and others in sharing the love of Jesus Christ to the most neglected, unevangelized and marginalized peoples in a world without borders.

² See www.un.org/millenniumgoals and www.micahchallenge.org for more information. These can also be found at www.thefellowship.info/mdg.

³ See www.thefellowship.info/Missions for information about these and other CBF missions efforts.

Lesson 4: Go Into All the World

Focal Scriptures:

Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 12:29-31

Activities and Questions for Discussion:

**Read the focal Scripture passages of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. How are the two related? How do they inform and affect one another?

**As Christians, how do we understand our responsibility and motivation to go into all the world? How would you define God's mission in the world? How do you think you are called to participate in that mission?

**Prepare a printout or poster listing the MDG's. Why do you think the United Nations as well as many communities of faith, including CBF, have endorsed these goals? How do these goals relate to your understanding of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment? What can you do to make progress toward meeting these goals?

**Choose one or more secular songs that address our responsibilities to care for one another and play them for the group.

Also consider having a printout of the lyrics that the group might follow along. Some suggestions are "Hands" by Jewel; "Waiting On the World to Change" by John Mayer; "Hammer and a Nail" by Indigo Girls; "There's a Hole In the World Tonight" by the Eagles; "Another Day In Paradise" by Phil Collins.

For the song(s), what does it say about our responsibility to one another? What does it say about the impact or effect that we can have in the world and/or for one another? How does the message of the song differ from those of the Focal Scriptures? How are they similar? How might the messages of secular music be used to share messages that are also important to people of faith?

**Have participants plan and carry out a hands-on local mission project.

Perhaps have them consider one or more of the MDG's that their project might help to address. They may need to enlist the help of parents or other adults in the congregation. In preparation for this, you may have them first investigate various agencies and ministries in your area. Find out contact information, purposes and goals of the organization, population served by them, and their needs for volunteers, donations, etc. This investigation will allow them to prepare for their project while also learning more about the needs and the ministries in your community. Schedule a time to carry out the project.

After they have completed the project, plan a time of "debriefing" so that the group can reflect on the experience, what they learned, how the work that they did connects with their faith, and how the ministry helps to fulfill the Great Commission and/or the Great Commandment.

Be sure to take pictures or video of your group involved in the project. Consider finding a time for the youth to report on their project within the congregation, perhaps for a Sunday School class, Mission group, or at a fellowship meal. Have some of the youth speak, share pictures and/or video of their work, etc. Be sure that they focus not only on what they did but also on what they learned and how it affected them and those they served.

**Hold a Hunger Simulation dinner for your group. This activity can be most effective if the participants do not know ahead of time what is going to happen. Consider sending them an invitation to a special dinner to be held in their honor but do not disclose details about the dinner. You will probably need several adults to assist, depending on your group size. One model for how to do this can be found on pages 26-28.

Closing Prayer:

Come into our waiting hearts, Holy God, as we seek you each day of our lives, that in seeking you we might find you, in finding you we might worship you, in worshipping we might give ourselves to you, and in giving ourselves, we might become your hands and feet and heart in this world that needs your love and grace. Mold us, we pray, in the image of your Son, Jesus the Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Resource Pages

Lesson 4

This model for a Hunger Simulation Dinner can work with relatively little preparation and for groups of varying sizes. As each youth enters the rooms, have them draw a number 1, 2 or 3. Instead of numbers, you may also use copies of the “money” found on the following pages. The two pages should be copied to make a two-sided page and then cut into “dollars.” The money represents how much the average person in those areas has to live on per day: \$50 in the First World (1), \$5 in the Second World (2), and \$1 in the Third World (3).

Make sure the vast majority of the numbers are 3’s or \$1’s. Depending on the size of your group, you will want about twenty percent 2’s and ten percent 1’s. For example, for a group of 20 youth, have two 1’s, four 2’s, and fourteen 3’s. Instruct the youth to sit at separate tables that are labeled for their groups, being sure to crowd the larger group of 3’s around as few tables as possible.

First bring out the First World meal. It should be a full meal such as a chicken dinner, or pizza dinner, with a side dish, dessert and choice of beverages. There should be slightly more food than they need for the meal. Have adults serve them, pay attention to them, offer seconds throughout the meal, etc., as though they are in a restaurant.

Once the first meal is served, bring out the Second World meal. It should consist of some kind of simple soup like vegetable or chicken noodle, bread and tea or water. There should be a generous portion for each person but no extra food. This group should be served their food but no further attention paid to them.

Finally, bring out the Third World meal. This group will be served small bowls of rice and a small cup of water with no ice. Consider bringing their food out on trays or a cart, placing it down for them and walking away.

Have the adults observe their reactions to the food they are offered and what they do and say as they eat. How do the First World people respond to having more than they need? Do they offer to share? Do those at the other tables ask for more food from them? Do you observe any resentment? Anger? Compassion? Confusion?

Youth should be instructed that food may not be taken by force or without permission. Any other questions or decisions about how the food is shared are to be left up to the participants. It is best that the adults observe and not interact or intervene with the youth. Once everyone has had a chance to eat, discuss the activity with them. What were the observations and feelings of each group? How did they react to being asked for food or having to ask someone else for food?

Talk to the participants about the significance of the amounts of money represented on their “dollars.” Ask them to imagine having to live on \$1 or \$5 per day. In the U.S., while many people live on less, the average person lives on about \$50 per day. This is about \$54,750 per year for a family three, which, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, is approximately the average family size in the U.S.¹ See the websites which discuss the Millennium Development Goals for more information about income in other areas of the world.

*Read Luke 12:48b. What do the words of Jesus mean for those of us to whom much has been given? What are our responsibilities to others?

1 www.factfinder.census.gov

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
\$1 \$1

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
\$1 \$1

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
\$1 \$1

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
\$1 \$1

\$1 \$1
ONE DOLLAR
\$1 \$1

\$5 \$5
FIVE DOLLARS
\$5 \$5

\$5 \$5
FIVE DOLLARS
\$5 \$5

\$50 \$50
FIFTY DOLLARS
\$50 \$50

Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

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especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

Most of Eastern Europe (former Soviet and
Eastern bloc countries), Turk states, China,
parts of Northern Africa and the Middle
East.

Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and most of Africa.
Parts of the Caribbean and Latin America,
especially Haiti and Honduras, Peru and
most of Mexico. Parts of India and the
Middle East.

The United States, Canada, Western Europe,
Japan, and a few small Middle Eastern states
(like Kuwait and Qatar),
Australia

Most of Eastern Europe (former Soviet and
Eastern bloc countries), Turk states, China,
parts of Northern Africa and the Middle
East.

Suggestions for Further Study

Baptist Distinctives and History

Books:

Bill Leonard. *Dictionary of Baptists in America*. InterVarsity Press, 1994.

H. Leon McBeth. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. B & H Academic, 1987.

Walter B. Shurden. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993.
A study guide is also available.

R. Wayne Stacy. *A Baptist's Theology*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1999.

Other Resources:

Celebrate Freedom: A Baptist Distinctives Vacation Bible School. Smyth & Helwys Publishing.

Pamela R. Durso. *A Short History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Movement*. Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2006. (Other resources are available from the Baptist History and Heritage Society at www.baptisthistory.org).

We Are Baptists. Judson Press. Studies available for younger and older elementary, youth and adults.

Youth Ministry Resources

Daniel Bagby. *Beyond the Myths: The Journey to Adulthood*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2007.

Kenda Creasy Dean. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Upper Room Books, 1998.

Charles Hambrick and Joy Lawler. *To the Point - Religions: Encountering People of Other Faiths*. Abingdon Press, 1995.

Brent McDougal. *The River of the Soul: A Spirituality Guide for Christian Youth*. New Hope Publishers, 2001.

David F. White. *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach*. The Pilgrim Press, 2005.

Missions

Books:

Ray Bakke. *Theology as Big as the City*. InterVarsity Press, 1997

Ray Bakke. *The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World*. InterVarsity Press, 1987.

Stan Guthrie. *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century*. Paternoster, 2002.

Nile Harper. *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Toward Justice*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.

Doug Pagitt. *A Christianity Worth Believing: Hope-Filled, Open-Armed, Alive-and-Well Faith*. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Other Resources:

The Justice Mission: A Video-Enhanced Curriculum Reflecting the Heart of God for the Oppressed of the World.
Zondervan Publishing House, 2002.

Hand To Hand. A collection of over 150 mission project ideas compiled by CBF of NC.

Religious Liberty

Books:

C. Welton Gaddy. *Faith and Politics: What's a Christian To Do?* Peake Road, 1996.

Resources available from Baptist Joint Committee:

Citizens of Two Kingdoms: Lessons for Youth in Baptist History and Religious Liberty, 1996.

Freedom is Never Free. A video production of Baptist Joint Committee.

How We Got That Way: Baptists on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State.

An address by Walter B. Shurden delivered at the 1996 Religious Liberty Conference in Washington, D.C.

Our Challenge, Their Future: Securing Religious Liberty for Our Children and Grandchildren.

A video production of Baptist Joint Committee.

Religious Liberty Council Issue Guide: Advocating Religious Liberty in the Public Square.

Connecting in North Carolina

CBF of NC Partners:

CBF

Lay Ministries

WMU of NC

Baptist Men of NC

Higher Education

Campbell University

Chowan University

Gardner-Webb University

Mars Hill College

Meredith College

Wake Forest University

Wingate University

Theological Education

Campbell Divinity

Baptist House of Duke Divinity

Gardner-Webb Divinity

Wake Forest Divinity

Social Ministries

Baptist Children's Homes

Baptist Retirement Homes

NC Baptist Hospital School of Pastoral Care

New Churches

Identity Partners

Associated Baptist Press

Baptist Center for Ethics

Baptist Foundation of NC

Baptist Joint Committee

Baptist World Alliance

Baptists Today

Biblical Recorder

Initiatives Shaping the Future of CBFNC:

- Racial Reconciliation/Diversity
- College Ministry
- Evangelism
- Hispanic Ministry
- Foundational Beliefs
- Wealth and Poverty
- Reference and Referral
- Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors

Missions Initiatives:

- NC Missions Initiative - Addressing Poverty in Our Own Backyard
- Church Planting - Anglo and other, traditional and non
- Belize - Belize Baptist Association and the Baptist Bible School of Belize
- Ukraine - Village of Hope Foster Home in Kiev
- CBF Global Missions - through the Offering for Global Missions and support of individual field personnel
- Disaster Relief - in NC and the nation
- Many additional partners who receive monetary support through the CBFNC budget

Visit www.cbfnc.org for more information.

Events and Training from CBFNC:

- Annual General Assembly
- Fellowship on the Move Regional Tour
- Spiritual Formation Retreats
- Marriage and Singles Retreats
- Staff Ministers' Retreat
- Training Events for clergy and lay leaders
- Annual Youth Retreats to the beach, to ski and to missions sites
- Annual Choir Retreats for children and youth
- Children's Missions Days
- College missional experience and retreat
- Sunday School Literature Workshops



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