

# FBFI BREAKOUT SESSION

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## Determining Ministry Associations

### I. Biblical Ministry

- A. Biblical ministry begins with a commitment to sound doctrine and correct ministry philosophy and practice. What do you believe and what do you want to achieve?
- B. Biblical ministry is primarily local church based and focused. How would ministry partnerships help or hinder this church ministry?
- C. Biblical ministry is to be full-orbed and balanced in its pursuit of God's purposes. Is this church ministry deficient or imbalanced in its overall ministry or pre-occupied with one or few emphases? Do we need help from others? What can we do to help others?

### II. Ministry Partnerships

- A. Ministries commonly forge partnerships to advance the gospel cause in evangelism, discipleship, church planting, missions, Christian education, etc. The NT letters are full of such partnerships.
  - 1. **Associations—associate:** “to join as a partner, connect together, combine, join” (Webster’s Dictionary)
  - 2. **Affiliation—affiliate:** “to bring or receive into close connection as a member or branch” (Webster’s Dictionary)
  - 3. These words can be used interchangeably though an official affiliation demands more carefulness.
- B. The most basic principle is that we usually associate and affiliate with those most like ourselves in doctrine and practice and with those who are most trustworthy.

- C. Complex ministry relations develop as cooperative ministry interests multiply, diversify, and continue over time.
- D. Everyone has a grid, formal or informal, for evaluating associations and affiliations. Therefore, do not feel badly if you need to say “no.”

### **III. Pastoral Responsibility**

- A. The pastor (along with his lay leaders) is responsible to protect the flock from error and other harmful emphases (John 10:7–13; Acts 20:28–32; Eph. 4:11–16 [esp. 14]; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Jude 3; Rom. 16:17; Heb. 5:14).
- B. The pastor is responsible to stay abreast of dangerous religious and cultural trends and warn his lay leaders and his people.
- C. The pastor must take a right stand and keep a right spirit, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).
- D. The pastor should develop deep, biblical convictions and display a gracious and patient attitude toward those he instructs.
- E. The pastor guides and guards his church in choosing appropriate ministry associations and affiliations.

### **IV. Realistic Perspective**

- A. The history of the church is a history of debate and dissent. Controversy is nothing new and will not go away.
- B. Technology has increased our awareness of and access to controversial matters and has increased the speed of the debate, making it almost impossible to stay abreast of all trends. Everyone has access to essentially the same online information. Be careful not to become obsessed with the endless pursuit of trivial information and incessant debate and divisiveness. This obsession is unhealthy and off-focus.
- C. It is important to understand the last century of the American protestant developments, especially the last 100 years. The world did not begin with the current generation. There is a historical

context into which we are born, live, and serve. Seek to understand the historical basis for assessing current ecclesiastical issues and relationships. Understand the historical twentieth century struggles within fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Understand some of the current issues facing church ministry within evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Ministry responsibilities will require us to exercise discernment in examining religious trends. Come to the discussion with a teachable spirit, an open heart, and put forth an earnest effort to become more discerning as a developing man of God (cf. Heb. 5:14). Seek the good judgment of well-informed, godly people.

- D. When you go out to serve full-time in churches you will need to understand the church setting in which serve. Read your environment.
  - 1. As a youth pastor, assistant pastor, missionary, or evangelist, you need to know the sensitivities of your pastor. Your pastor has lived through times you are not familiar with.
  - 2. As a pastor you need to know the history of the church and its sensitivities, stand, and positions from the past as well as where you personally stand on various issues.
- E. Discernment takes time and effort. If the judgments were easy, it would not take discernment. Issues are not always clearly right/wrong or black/white. Some things are matters of wisdom, emphasis, direction (where they will lead over time), and timing (due to past ministry problems). Discernment will grow over the years of reading and working with people and problems as a pastor.
- F. People bring their own agendas, personalities, heroes, tolerances, intolerances, and church experiences with them to your ministry. American religious life is pluralistic, biblically uninformed, and highly opinionated. Our culture thrives on free expression. Be prepared.

**V. Profound Ramifications—When you associate or officially affiliate with a ministry or movement, your choices involve the following:**

- A. Endorsement—you are lending your name and reputation to the effort or organization
- B. Effort—you are showing your willingness to expend time and energy to promote the common cause
- C. Economics—you are giving and supporting the common cause
- D. Exposure—you are exposing your people to messages, ministries, missionaries, music, and methods of those with whom you affiliate
- E. Entanglements—over time you will share speakers, pulpits, teams, conferences, and camps with those with whom you affiliate. Only reciprocal relationships work long-term.
- F. Edification (or Erosion)—over time you will take on the characteristics of those with whom you affiliate
- G. Example—you are modeling or influencing how others should or will choose their associations and affiliations.