

Midweek Study

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FOUNDATIONS

of Our Faith

Working Together with God (Article 14: Cooperation)

"We are God's co-workers." - 1 Corinthians 3:9

Article 14: Cooperation¹ - "Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament."

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

"Cooperation doesn't emerge from politics, sociology, or sentimentalism. Instead, our voluntary cooperation as Baptists is grounded in the fact that we share a common salvation and are called to common purposes that can best be accomplished by working together. For Southern Baptists cooperation means a worldwide kingdom work with others who share our faith, values, and worldview."²

I. Cooperation in the New Testament³

The New Testament speaks of cooperative partnerships in doctrine, benevolence, and Gospel extension:

- The churches at Antioch and Jerusalem cooperated in a doctrinal question about the Gospel (Acts 15).
- Paul encouraged the Macedonian churches to collect a financial offering for the saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8-9). For Paul, the offering demonstrated the unity of the one Gospel for Jews and Greeks (Rom 15:27).
- Paul received financial gifts from the church at Philippi to further the Gospel (Phil 4:10-23). He also anticipated help from the church at Rome (Rom 15:24).

II. Cooperation in Baptist Churches

- Baptists have historically cooperated in 17th century England, as well as forming associations and conventions in the 18th and 19th centuries.

¹ From the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000>.

² Charles S. Kelley Jr. (2013). *The Baptist Faith and Message*. LifeWay Press. Retrieved from <https://read.lifeway.com>

³ Taken from Daniel Akin, "Cooperation and the Christian and the Social Order" www.danielakin.com.

- “The highest seat of authority in the local church is the local church itself, under the authority of Christ.”
- Every SBC church is completely independent. There is no denominational control or hierarchy, as there are in most other denominations. Each church is self-governed and determines its own affairs. For example:
 - Every SBC church chooses its own pastor, and leadership structure.
 - Every SBC church owns its own buildings and assets.
 - Every SBC church determines its own programs.

III. Cooperation for Mount Vernon Baptist Church

- **The Dover Baptist Association** (www.doverbaptist.org) Over 60 Baptist churches that partner together for the purpose of local missions/ministry and strengthening local churches and pastors.
- **Baptist General Association of Virginia** (www.bgav.org) 1,150 Baptist churches (mostly in Virginia) that work together with the goal of supporting the local church and building the kingdom of God.
- **Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia** (www.sbcv.org) Over 800 Southern Baptist Convention churches in Virginia cooperating to assist local congregations in their task of fulfilling the Great Commission.
- **The Southern Baptist Convention** (www.sbc.net) Nearly 47,000 churches and 13 million members who cooperate together in a world-wide effort of missions.

IV. Cooperation in the Southern Baptist Convention

- **It is the largest association of Christian churches in Virginia and in America.**
- **It is the most diverse association of churches** - SBC churches include every race, nationality, and ethnic group. Each Sunday, services are held in over 80 languages in the U.S.

RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Dominant Ethnic Composition	Congregations	Members	Dominant Ethnic Composition	Congregations	Members
Anglo churches	35,594	11,562,556	Native American churches	416	31,421
African American churches	3,899	873,035	Chinese churches	280	32,749
Hispanic churches	3,317	217,418	Filipino churches	157	9,435
Korean churches	895	67,309	Deaf churches	45	2,020
Hatian churches	419	49,544	20+ other ethnic and language groups	1,496	129,116

Provided by the Baptist Research Ethnic Fellowship Network, 7/31/2024

- **It is one of the most evangelistic groups** - The SBC averages 622 baptisms each day and plants 14 new churches each week! (226,000 baptisms in 2023!! 608 churches planted in 2023!!)
- **It allows us to identify with other Christians** around the world who are known for their commitment to the Bible. Unlike other groups, the SBC has no man-made “creed”. The Bible is our only authority.
- **It allows our church to participate in the largest missionary organization in the world.** Through the SBC “Cooperative Program” we help support 3,000 home missionaries serving the United States, Canada, Guam, and the Caribbean, as well as sponsoring around 3,500 foreign missionaries in 185 nations of the world.

Practical Applications:

1. Realize **“If you want to go faster, go alone. If you want to go further, go together.”** (source unknown) Thank God for like-minded and like-hearted brothers and sisters who work together to accomplish great things for Him.
2. Give generously to cooperative missions like Lottie Moon (International Missions) and Annie Armstrong (North American Missions) and support the Cooperative Program of the SBC. The financial system is not perfect, but it is a blessing to missionaries and to evangelism.
3. Look for ways to cooperate in missions, church planting and evangelism through our partners.
4. Celebrate other Christ-honoring, Bible-believing organizations, and join together when possible.