

APPLYING THE INTRODUCTION

1. What are the basic presuppositions that underlie your practice of ministry? In other words, what things seem so obviously true that you assume everyone sees them the same way?

2. What do you believe about the Bible?

- a. If you believe the entire Bible is the inerrant, infallible, divinely inspired word of God, what does that mean for your practice of ministry?
- b. If you believe the entire Bible is not inerrant, infallible or divinely inspired, what does that mean for your practice of ministry?
- c. How do you deal with the parts that are hard to understand?
- d. How do you deal with people who disagree with your understanding?

3. Are you part of a particular denomination, association or church tradition?

If so, what practices or policies go along with that? For instance:

- a. How are pastors called or assigned to churches?
- b. Are there any restrictions on who may be a pastor?
- c. How are local churches governed or administered?
- d. Is there any authority beyond the local church?
- e. Is there any oversight or authority over pastors?
- f. Are there any restrictions on the roles women may fill, or people who have been divorced, or other groups?
- g. Do you agree with all these practices and policies? Why or why not? How strongly?
- h. If you have substantial disagreements, what do you think God wants you to do about it?

4. Different groups of Christians often have different understandings about things like predestination versus free will, the meaning and practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the end times, and so on.

- a. Have you developed a clear understanding of these things for yourself?

- b. If not, how will you reach that clear understanding?
 - c. How do you relate to those who see things differently than you do?
5. List those things you consider to be the essential, non-negotiable elements of the Christian faith; in other words, things that, if someone believes wrongly about them, they are not truly a Christian.
- a. For each one: explain why it is essential to Christianity and salvation.
 - b. For each one: is there a difference between “believes wrongly” and “believes differently than you do?” If yes, what is the difference?

APPLYING CHAPTER 1

1. What do you believe is God’s main purpose for the church? Feel free to disagree with what the book says – but if you do, support your position from the Bible.
2. If your church has a mission statement, write it here. If your church doesn’t have a mission statement, what do you think most of your people would say is your church’s mission or purpose?
3. How does answer #2 compare to answer #1?
4. What things do your church and people do that fulfill your mission? List as many as you can.
5. List any church activities that do not contribute to fulfilling the mission. For each one, should the activity be changed because it doesn’t fit the mission statement, or should the mission statement be changed to include the activity?
6. Prayerfully list anything revealed in this exercise that might call for a discussion with your church leaders. How and when will you do that?