

“Truth, Community, and Mission”, BCF sermon on core values, 2015-8-23

What are you doing here?? [*Examples*] Something we as a church, and as church leadership, need to ask ourselves. Why are we doing what we do? What’s really important to us? What are we *doing* here?

- For long-time members: to report to you our time in leadership retreat and discussions about our core values (*what’s really important to us as a church*).
- For new folks, visitors, church-shoppers: what’s important to us & what makes us distinctive or different from other churches.
- For inquirers, the unwilling... this might help answer the question, why bother with church at all? Why bother investing *any* time and energy in this thing called a local church?

The process, elders seeking the Lord about our core values, what they were, what they should be, and where we have been weak. About a dozen values, centering around three very core.

First: What is the church? It is a gathering of people who through faith in Christ are walking under God’s rule in his Kingdom and bound for a future glory. All who are born again in Christ are united spiritually with him, and in him with all other believers around the world. The local church is in a visible expression of that union in a community.

What we value...

1. The TRUTH he has revealed to us...

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Romans 12:2 ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Hebrews 4:12 ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

2 Timothy 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

We hold it as axiomatic that God is and has spoken. God’s word keeps speaking to us. The other night as I lay in bed I was thinking through the Lord’s prayer, and came to *Your*

kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:10) If I was teaching disciples how to pray I would have included petitions like, “May your glory be seen” or “may your presence be known” or “may your promises be fulfilled” or “may your comfort be felt”... all very important things to pray. But here in this short pattern prayer it is, “may your will be done...”

A young man said in a Bible study just this week, “That’s what I’m looking for in a church: not that they will tell me what I want to hear or make me feel good, but will tell me the truth.” Our calling as preachers and teachers at BCF, whether from the pulpit or classroom or home group is to tell you the truth of what God has said.

Our job as church elders and teachers and leaders is not to tell you our opinion, to give you the latest study or poll, or even to tell you what we think God is saying, but to tell you what God has said and is eternally saying in his Word.

Four values that come out of this...

- **God’s Word** – preaching, teaching, and applying the Truth which sets us free.
- **Christ-centered ministry** – we exalt Jesus as Lord and all-sufficient Savior.
- **Spiritual life** – the Holy Spirit transforms and empowers us to live for the Lord.
- **Training** – equipping children and adults through Christian education.

You live and move in a world, a culture, that does not tell you these things. All around you are voices and images telling you what to believe and live for and spend your money and time on. When you come here on a Sunday morning or go to house group you should hear from another world, the one where God is at center, where Christ rules as Lord...

But we are more than a preaching center, a truth-conveying place, we are a place where these truths are worked out in relationships...

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2. The COMMUNITY he has called us to be. *“...from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”* (Ephesians 4:16) (The church is organic and interconnected like a body.)

We are not just a place for Bible data download for individuals. *“When we take God for our God, we take his people for our people.”* (Matthew Henry) When we are united spiritually to Christ in salvation we are connected to all other believers in Christ, and this is expressed practically in the local church.

Matthew 16:18 *I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* (By this he did not mean a building and stained glass, steeples, and candles. He also did not mean a rockin’ sound and light system with a smoke machine. He spoke of a community, of relationships.

Acts 2:42... *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*

“One another” – dozens of times in the NT. “Love, encourage, be patient with...”

1 Timothy 3:15 *the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*

Hebrews 3:13 *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

1 Peter 2:5 *you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Rev 2:1... In the final book of the NT, Revelation, John see Jesus as the One... *“who walks among the seven golden lampstands,”* which represent individual local churches. (Rev 2:1)

Four values from this:

- **Corporate worship** – we gather to honor God and to hear his Word.
- **Small groups** give us context for love and accountability.
- **Every person** is gifted for some area of service and involved.
- **Team leadership** by men who seek to serve as Christ did.

My biggest challenge: real community vs. virtual community. So much of my interaction with people these days is virtual, it's text and emails, voice mails, online in messages, posts, forums, pictures. As much a part of the world as these are they do not replace face to face, real presence community.

How much travel with folks meant to Jan Lu, along with flowers, meals, conversations.

But we don't stop there, enjoying truth and being with one another in community. “If the church does not evangelize it will fossilize.” (A. W. Pink)

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3. The MISSION he has called us to fulfill.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”
(Matthew 28:19-20)

Luke 24:47 *and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Colossians 1:28 *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

Psalm 67:2 *that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.*
Psalm 145:4 *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.*

Four values come out of this...

- **To make disciples** – winning, building, and sending mature followers of Christ.
- **Mentoring the next generation** – a vital dimension of our mission.
- **Our neighbors** – we will cross the aisle and street to reach them.
- **The nations** in our midst and abroad – we will cross cultures to reach them.

Recent witnessing / spiritual conversations. “Getting new eyes to see people.” They are immortal, with the need to see themselves as God sees them, to receive his forgiveness and gift of life... [*recent experiences*]

As a church we value the Truth he has revealed to us, the Community he has called us to be, and the Mission he has given us to fulfill.

So we come back to the question, why this local church? Why bother with church at all?

If you are a long-time attender of this church we need to be reminded about what’s important. Why we exist. We don’t want to be diverted from the most important things God has called us to, or to become unbalanced. Like a three-legged stool... truth, community, and mission all needed!

If you are a Christian, the life of God in you is important. You must cultivate, water, grow that faith. You will be tempted to make a podcast your church, stay away from other Christians, and put your life on idle or at least a safe auto-pilot. But you have an enemy who seeks to distort truth and deceive you, who would divide the body of Christ and seek to isolate you, and who would –whether with pleasures, entertainment, busyness, poor relationship choices, or life pursuits that don’t have time for God and his people – to divert you from the mission and calling he has given you – and us – which can only be fulfilled in community.

If you are new to our community we invite you to consider making BCF your church home. If you want to hear Truth, be connected to a multigenerational community, and be equipped for a life Mission, we invite you to prayerfully join us.