



Foundational Ministries of the Church

Acts 2:42-47

- I want to take a few moments and share with you some information about the state of the church here at Second Baptist Cedartown.
- We are not a business. So, at the end of the day we have to remind ourselves our main goal isn't focused on just numbers – our main goal is to simply be faithful to the Lord. No matter the season.
- I am reminded in the Book of Acts that numbers can be helpful in some ways to give us a snapshot of where things are and what the Lord is doing. 3,000 people were saved on the Day of Pentecost after Peter preached. People and their households hear the Gospel and

respond. Missionaries were sent and offerings were taken up. We know these stories because someone shared about where the Lord was at work.

- I want to share some snapshots of where the Lord has been at work in our church.
- We filter our ministries through our purpose statement as a church, which we believe to be a biblical definition of why we're here.
 - o Worship God, disciple believers, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - o Sunday School – avg. 100. Discipleship Institute – avg. 60.
 - o ESOL – Three classes now on Weds night. Around 30 average
 - o WOL – 40-50 average
 - o Celebrate Recovery – avg 45-60 every Thursday. Last Thursday we had 75.
 - o 9 Baptisms and 26 new members in 2022.
 - o In 2022 – through mission trips, CR, jail ministry, discipleship ministries, and other evangelistic outreach – nearly 100 people came to know the Lord because you shared the Gospel with them.
 - o Bless Every Home update
- All of these things have a cumulative impact – over the past 5 years since 2018 we have had 95 new members and 40 baptisms. That's with a world-wide pandemic thrown in the middle there.
- We have also paid down the debt on our building substantially. Over \$600,000 in the past four years. We are finally under \$1 Million in what we owe, and we will close on refinancing our loan in the next week or so. We were held up with getting a survey done.
- The new loan will be for 15 years. With a rate of 4.25% for five years. Our current rate is 5.5%

Main Point: The foundational ministries of the early church help us to keep our focus on things that matter.

- With all of these things in mind – what are we going to focus on in the future at Second Baptist?

I. Doctrine

- a. They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles. To put it simply, they devoted themselves to learning sound doctrine.
- b. Every person and every organization has a set of values that guides them in decision making.
- c. Entire nations and civilizations have to get their values from somewhere.

Questions related to ethics have to be answered in this life. What constitutes a family? How should children be raised? How do we know what is right and what is wrong? When should people be prosecuted from crimes? How do we know what should be a crime? How should people treat one another? What should be the recourse if people don't treat each other well?

- d. What should guide those decisions?
 - i. Our experiences?
 - ii. Our emotions?
 - iii. The collective opinions of the majority of society?
- e. We believe in absolute truth given to us by God's Word.
- f. Things change all the time in ministry and in the church. One thing that should never change is our devotion and adherence to sound doctrine. We will never abandon the Word of the Living God.

II. Ministerial Care

- a. It seems obvious that from the very beginning of the early church they were devoted to ministerial care. What do we mean by that?
 - i. Minister – someone who serves. Every Christian is a minister. Ephesians 4 – God called pastors to equip the saints for the work of ministry.
- b. It is important and biblical for us to take care of one another.
- c. Titus 2 is clear that every generation within the church matters. It really is a blessing and a special bond to think that there are a group of people who are there to minister to you through every single season of life. And you are there to minister to them.
- d. This is especially true for the most vulnerable among us. James said that pure and undefiled religion is to care for the widows and orphans among you.
- e. There are offerings taken up in the book of Acts that were relief offerings for the poor or those experiencing difficulties.
- f. The church doesn't exist solely for this purpose. Matter of fact, the church exists so that the Gospel may reach the entire world.
- g. But it is a great blessing to being a part of the body of Christ in the context of a local church.
- h. We do ministerial care through three main ministries – *deacon family ministry, Sunday school classes, and pastoral staff.*

III. The Ordinances

- a. They went from house to house and broke bread. They took part in the Lord's Supper together.

- b. Baptism was the first thing that new Christians we called to do.
- c. These are the two ordinances given by Christ to His church.
 - i. Do this in remembrance of Me.
 - ii. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- d. Every time we take part in this, we are displaying a picture of the Gospel for all to see. They are symbols that point to all Jesus has done for us.
- e. We are going to continue to take part in the ordinances on a regular basis as a church.
 - i. Lord's Supper – there is a tendency among Baptists for the Lord's Supper to only be taken once or twice a year. At most – quarterly. We take the Lord's Supper monthly. That's more in line with the practice of the Early Church and we are commanded by Jesus to do it.
 - ii. I have had some many years ago who said they didn't do the Lord's Supper often because it lost its value the more they did it. We take up an offering every week. We preach every week. We pray every week. Why in the world couldn't we do the Lord's Supper more often than once or twice a year?
- f. Baptism – some have taken baptism to conform to a different meaning in today's time. I think it's unfortunate when baptisms are performed at random places, not connected to a local church. You have heard of baptisms in locker rooms or football fields. The only problem with that is that baptism has always been closely connected to the discipleship that one receives through the local church.

- i. MAKE Discipleship and Baptize them. TEACHING them to observe...

IV. Fellowship

- a. We take that word to mean we're eating fried chicken after the morning service.
That's great, but that's not really what it means.
- b. Greek term – koinonia – a special bond between believers. A genuine community of people who have things in common. A family of Christ followers. Another Greek term that is used often in describing the nature of the church is oikos.
 - i. Not just Greek yogurt. It means family. The foundational unit in society.
- c. We are a covenanted community of Christ followers who have voluntarily came together for the proclamation of the Gospel and to make disciples.
- d. The other week we started off our member's meeting with reciting our church covenant together before we took part in the Lord's Supper.
- e. It is a special thing to be gathered in God's house with God's people.
- f. The only way to have fellowship with others is to gather with others. The gathering of God's people is central to the mission of the church.
 - i. Church in Greek -- Ecclesia – chosen or called out assembly.
- g. Hebrews 10:25 – Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as some so often do.
- h. What's the NT model for gathering? In Acts 2 it was every day. But very early on it was at least once a week on the Lord's Day – Sunday.
- i. We are living in a day and age where we need to repent of our lackadaisical commitment to attendance in God's house.

- j. We have about 350 resident church members. These are not folks who have moved off or we don't know where they are anymore. These are folks who have been involved in the church the past couple of years at least. I know some of these folks are homebound, and we should do all we can to care for them in their circumstances.
- k. What has happened in many churches across America is not simply that attendance is down. It's the frequency of attendance that's down. The definition of active church member has changed from someone who comes at least once a week to someone who comes twice a month.
- l. If you have a congregation of 200 and people go from attending every week to every other week – you could have an average attendance that is cut in half.
 - i. Spiritual disciplines begin to suffer.
 - ii. Communication with the entire church becomes more difficult.
 - iii. The fellowship between believers is weakened.
 - iv. I know it can be hard
 - 1. But we need to be with the gathering of God's people. There is no lone-ranger mentality in the Bible concerning the Christian life.
 - v. Do we have enough time to devote to gathering?
 - 1. Americans spent an average of 1,300 hours last year on Social Media.
 - 2. That's 3.5 hours a day.
 - 3. And we're asking people to spend one or two hours at church A WEEK?

V. Prayer

a. Charles Spurgeon on prayer

i. Prayer is doubts destroyer, ruin's remedy, the antidote to all anxieties.

ii. All good is born in prayer, and all good springs from it.

b. They devoted themselves to prayer.

c. Prayer is what support every ministry of the church.

i. Claude King – prayer is not the absence of work. It is the greatest work.