

## Sure Foundations, Part 2 1/14/18

Core Values are the underlying convictions of BVBC that create an unwavering guide for decisions, direction and the fulfillment of our mission.

Our mission-To introduce people to Jesus Christ and help them follow him.

As a ministry leadership team we have spent several months asking the question what do we value as BVBC, what are our deepest convictions about ministry and mission? What historically have we valued? What do we presently value? What is God calling us to? We'd have discussion among our whole staff and among the Deacon board as well and we are aligned around our Core Values.

And so what we want to do is take a few weeks in the beginning of the year to answer the question, "What do we value?" in a series we are calling Sure Foundations. I'm going to put these on the screen. At the end of the series we are going to give you a bookmark with our core values.

### 8 Core Values

**Bible-Centered, Generously Orthodox**

**Meaningful Membership & Community**

**Unity in Diversity**

**The Pursuit of Excellence, Relevance & Innovation**

**Thriving Families**

**Authenticity and Restoration**

**Discipleship Driven**

**Gospel Partnerships for our City & World**

### The Pursuit of Excellence, Relevance & Innovation

God deserves our best and so do people. We will strive to do ministry in a culturally relevant way to the best of our ability. This includes worship, teaching, programs, communication, facilities and outreach.

### God deserves our best and so do people.

Colossians 3:23-24

*<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

As Christians we are serving the Lord in everything that we do, from the smallest task to the largest project. Our love for the Lord and people (as Jesus says are the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commands) should cause us to strive for excellence, working heartily, in ministry to the best of our ability. We should never be calling it in or settling for the minimum because in doing so it communicates to people that we

really don't care about them, that there isn't anything exciting and life-changing about a relationship with Jesus. But the exact opposite is true- people matter to God and to us and there is nothing more exhilarating, more worth our best effort, nothing more transforming than walking on mission with Jesus. And so it should be evident that when we teach, we put considerable effort in bringing the Word, that our worship and music team is working hard to lead us to the throne, that our student ministry, children's ministry, up-keep of our facilities... our ministries are striving for excellence because God is worth it and so are people. As a staff this is the culture we are creating. Speed of the leader, speed of the team- Job performance reviews, goal setting... But this is the church, should we have business practices? Absolutely! 2 Timothy is basically a Job Performance and Goal setting session with his staff member, Timothy.

### 2 Timothy 2:15

***Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of God.***

Work with excellence, 2<sup>nd</sup> part

**We will strive to do ministry in a culturally relevant way to the best of our ability.**

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 Paul is building a case for why he lays aside his preferences and rights, his own cultural inclinations for the sake of winning souls for Christ.

### 1 Corinthians 9:22b-23

***I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.***

What Paul was saying here is: "I figured out some way to make Jesus Christ relevant to every person I meet because I understand that this is the best way I can reach any of them." There are untold numbers of secular people in our area who do not think that God is bad. They don't think that the Bible or church is bad. They simply think all of this is irrelevant - that it has no bearing on their everyday lives.

Illustration- I remember watching a show one time and it made me righteously angry. This kid and his parents go to church and come out, The mom says, now wasn't that nice? The little boy says, I didn't understand anything they said. And the dad says, you're not supposed to, it's church, now let's get home for the game!"

But nothing could be further from the truth. When properly understood, God's Word and the gospel message have enormous relevance in our lives. This is why, when we teach- we constantly want you to leave knowing how you can apply the teaching to your everyday life. When we plan events, workshops, provide ministries, we are looking to meet people where they are.

**The consistent pursuit of excellence and relevance produces innovation.** Like Paul he was determined to bring Christ to bear in all cultures and the result was innovative methods of bringing the gospel. Story of **Hudson Taylor...Pictures before and after**

And so we are not afraid to innovate and find ways that reach people, and have the freedom to fail along the way.

We value excellence, relevance and innovation. If you are serving, are you ministering to the best of your ability? Are you giving Jesus your best? If you see things that you think could be done better, that seem less than excellent-tell us. Comment cards, we want to know. I am not a delicate flower that can't handle critique. Now your definition of excellent may not be ours, but we will seek to do better.

### **Unity in Diversity**

Unity was made possible and commanded through Christ. Therefore, we will seek to make our church accessible and impacting for all generations, cultures, colors and faith backgrounds.

### **Unity was made possible and commanded through Christ.**

While we are talking about more than just racial diversity, I agree with Billy Graham who said that racism is the biggest social problem in our world today. And so I want to address racial diversity most prominently but this applies to all kinds of diversity. When Christians like MLK Jr. and before him Frederick Douglas, and William Wilberforce in England courageously stood for unity and equality among mankind it was deeply rooted in God's Word and their Christian faith. Not only are we all equal before God but Jesus Christ purchased unity, not segregation among all ethnic groups.

**Ephesians 2:13-16, 19-22**

***<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility***

***<sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility...***

***<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,***

*<sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

Christ removed all ethnic barriers in the Gospel, the most significant and hostile of them in 1<sup>st</sup> century Asia Minor? Jews and Gentiles. He said, there is no longer two races but one. For us today in our culture? We still made man-made racial barriers don't we? Black and white, or barriers between anglo and arab? Jesus removed the racial barrier. And therefore, racial reconciliation is a gospel issue that Christians should be working toward and promoting, and willing to stand against racism and prejudice when we see it. This week we learned that, allegedly, the President made some troublesome comments about immigrants and their country of origin. I'm a pastor and not a politician, but this is unacceptable. It is wrong and derogatory comments like this denigrate our citizens not make us great. I could not help but to think of what our indigenous missionaries to Haiti, the Pierres, who will be coming to speak with us, how they must have felt and those precious people, made in the image of Christ, must have felt about those comments. This does not align with the gospel.

But the Bible talks about unity in Christ beyond ethnic/racial diversity.

**Colossians 3:9-11**

*Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

In Christ, ethnic and social differences cease to be obstacles to deep, personal, intimate fellowship and unity. Now this does not mean that every minority culture gets swallowed up in the "Uniformity of majority culture." Each one is still distinct and beautiful and valuable.

Ex: Singing alto is different than singing bass. But it isn't a barrier to joining the choir, it is an asset.

The picture of heaven is unity in diversity praise God together.

**Revelation 7:9-10**

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

All of this means that ethnic, social and other differences are not merely boundaries to be overcome. Rather, we should celebrate them as expressions of God's multifaceted glory.

**Therefore, we will celebrate diversity and seek to make our church accessible and impacting for all generations, cultures, colors and faith backgrounds.**

OK, this is great in the ideal world, unity and diversity, all created equal! Easy to preach on but difficult to do. Even the Apostle Peter experienced that. Acts 10- God calls Jewish Peter to the Gentiles...embraces them, accepts them, baptizes them and eats bacon with them! A beautiful picture of unity in diversity, purchased by Jesus... But then he drifts back toward his homogenous roots....And Paul calls him out on it.

### **Galatians 2:11-13**

*But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised.*

*But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision.*

*As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. **I confronted them because I saw that they were not in line with the truth of the gospel message.***

What was wrong and not aligned with the gospel is separate but equal. Not associating with people who are different than us. Why? Because the Gospel calls us to unity in diversity! All of us, no matter what our cultural background are drawn toward homogeneous units. Those like us...because to embrace diversity is to lean into uncomfortable conversations, risk being misunderstood, it takes long to get from point a to point b. I'm almost never misunderstood by 35 year old white guys... For me to build and belong to a church that looks, thinks, acts just like me would be much easier. Generational Uniformity, being monochromatic, being all majority culture, being all democrats or all republicans, all "Baptists" is far easier...but diversity is far more beautiful and biblical. And if you are part of BVBC and you are not part of majority culture I want to say thank you for leaning into what is harder but more biblical.

Now this value is not new for BVBC. I applaud Pastor Bo Matthews for his personal efforts to reach across all kinds of lines, particularly black-white lines and build meaningful relationships with pastors in our area. And for valuing ethnic and generational diversity in our church, of making this a warm place for people of various faith backgrounds and denominations. We must not turn back, but build upon this foundation.

Celebrating diversity and making our church accessible for all generations, cultures, colors and faith backgrounds is hard work. If effort and intentionality don't happen we naturally drift toward homogeny and away from diversity. We need to ask and

answer hard questions like- Do we have any prejudices that have prevented us from being more involved in racial reconciliation? Does our leadership represent unity in diversity? Does our worship music express the beauty of diversity? How can we better hear from various backgrounds?

As **Martin Luther King** explained in his letters from a Birmingham jail real change, "comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men [and women] willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation." Today, I'd encourage you to take a moment and ask what persistent work you might do to break down some walls for the glory of God.