

Who We Are, What We Do

Core Values Overview

As we enter a new season of ministry, I want you to *know* who we are and what we do. Because clarity leads to conviction. Second, I want you to *embrace* it. So that you're a full-fledged *participant* in our church, and not just a spectator. And third, I want you to *apply* what we do. In your own life, and in our church.

So let's turn in our Bibles to 2 Timothy 3:16, and start with a *description* of our church.

If you've been around here for any length of time, this will sound familiar:

We are a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church.

Bible-*believing* because it's the inspired Word of God. Why wouldn't you believe it? It's God's revelation to us. Not because *I* say so, but because *it* says so. It's self-attesting.

2 Tim 3:16 – *All Scripture is breathed out by God.* Inspired by God. Comes from God. Scripture, referring to the sacred writings found in the Bible. We believe it, because God wrote it. *Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* 2 Pet 1:21. The Bible is self-*attesting* as God's Word.

And, self-*authenticating*. We believe it because it proves itself true, over and over again. From fulfilled prophecy and the confirmation of archeology, to the accuracy with which it describes the human condition and explains our world. Not to mention the power it has to penetrate our lives, convict our heart, and revive our soul. It's self-authenticating. Therefore we believe it. We're a Bible-*believing* church.

And a Bible-*preaching* church. We don't just *say* we believe it and never talk about it. We don't just say we believe it and teach something else. Our *own* thinking. And we don't serve up smooth-sounding platitudes to avoid what it says and tickle people's ears.

We preach it. We proclaim it. All of it. Just like the Apostle Paul said. *Preach the Word.* Far too many churches say they *believe* the Bible, but rarely or barely *preach* the Bible. Which is one of the reasons this phrase came out of my mouth in the first place.

We believe it *and* preach it. The fact that some don't, or barely do, betrays their *lack* of belief; contradicts what they say. We're not only a Bible-*believing* church, but a Bible-*preaching* church.

And last, we're Christ-exalting. Christ-worshipping. Christ-honoring. Because he's not only the *focal* point of the Bible, but the King of glory. God in the flesh. Lord of our lives. Savior of souls. Head of the church. *That in everything he might be preeminent.* (Col 1:18)

We don't just pay lip service to Jesus, as we heard in last week's message. We exalt Jesus. We don't just *say* he's Lord, we show it. In our worship, and in our lives. Which makes us a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church. It's who we are.

And that leads to our mission – what we do. What we're about.

Our mission is to glorify God through the fulfillment of The Great Commission in the spirit of The Great Commandment.

The Great Commission is the final instruction of Jesus in Matthew 28, to go and *make disciples* (19). Disciples, as in *followers* of Christ. How? By *leading* people to Christ

through faith and repentance, and *growing* people in Christ by baptizing and teaching them. We exist to glorify God – exalt him, magnify him – by *leading* people to Christ, and *growing* people in Christ. That's our mission, our purpose.

And we strive to fulfill it, with a heart of love. That's The Great Commandment part. Referring to Jesus' words in **Mt 22:37-39** – *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* You shall treat *them*, as you treat yourself. Care for *them*, as you care for yourself.

So our mission, our purpose, our goal as a church – is to glorify God, by making disciples, in a spirit of love. Love for God, and love for people. It's what we do.

Put all that together, and we're a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church that exists to glorify God through the fulfillment of The Great Commission, in the spirit of The Great Commandment. It's foundational. And I want you know it, embrace it, and apply it.

But that's not it. To that end, for that purpose and *because* of that mission, we are characterized by **6 Core Values**. 6 characteristics and pursuits. That express our heart, shape our ministries, and fulfill our mission.

Starting with . . .

Bold Preaching – Expository and Applicational (2 Tim 4:1-5)

We've already touched on it, but this makes it explicit. One of our values is bold preaching. Preaching, because of 2 Tim 4:2 – *Preach the word.* Proclaim it. And bold, because of what comes next. *Be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

Preach the word, *in season and out*. Meaning, when it's popular and when it's not. When it's well-received and when it's rejected. When hearts are soft, and when they're hard. That's *bold* preaching.

Anybody can tell people what they want to hear. But very few will tell people what they *need* to hear. Especially when they hate it. And hate you. That requires boldness. And that only comes from a firm conviction to *preach the Word*, and a firm belief that people desperately need to hear it.

➤ That said, the two qualifying words describe *how* we preach boldly – expository and applicational.

Expository simply means “with the intent to explain, according to the context.” So we preach, by explaining what the Bible says, based on the context of the Bible. That is, the sentence surrounding the words; the paragraph around the sentence; the book containing the paragraph.

In other words, instead of lifting a verse out of the Bible and making it mean something it didn't *originally* mean, we explain it according to the historical, grammatical context. We consider the culture and setting at the time of writing. And the original audience. And the actual grammar that's used. And what kind of literature it is.

And then we consider how that verse fits within the *whole* of Scripture. The canonical context; and theological context. That’s preaching with the intent to explain, according to the context.

Which is best done by working through a book of the Bible verse by verse. What we do *most* of the time. But even if we don’t, we still base our message on the text and context, not on our preconceived notions, or what we really want to say.

It’s expository, and applicational. Instead of just explaining the Bible, we apply it to our lives. How else can we reprove, rebuke, and exhort as we preach and teach? (2 Tim 4:2)

Put all that together, and you get this summary statement. Read it with me, will you?
Believing that the Bible is God’s Word, we proclaim it in context and apply it to our lives, depending on the Holy Spirit to work.
That’s our first core value.

➤ The second, moving a little quicker, is . . .

Passionate Worship – In Spirit and Truth (John 4:23-24)

Passionate, because the Bible is *full* of animated descriptions of worship; *full* of adoration and reverence. Like Ps 100:4 – *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise*. Or Ps 84:2 – *My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God*. That’s *passionate* worship.

And when it’s expressed in spirit and truth, it’s exactly what God is looking for. **Jn 4:24** – *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth*.

In *spirit*, means from your heart, regardless of your location. The place doesn’t matter, the situation doesn’t matter, nothing matters. Except your heart, and the truth. The truth of who God *is*, and what he *requires* for worship. Namely, faith and repentance.

We *can’t* worship based on a *false* view of God, or *false* beliefs; and we *won’t* worship if our heart’s not right. If we don’t believe. But when we do, when it’s in spirit *and* truth, it’s *passionate*.

So say it with me:

Believing that Jesus deserves our adoration, we join our hearts and live our lives to exalt his name.

➤ Third, is . . .

Fervent Prayer – Dependent and Expectant (Eph 6:18)

Prayer is a core value because we want God’s best. For his glory and our joy. And, he *tells* us to pray. Eph 6:18 – [Pray] *at all times in the Spirit* [in tune with the Spirit]. Pray.

But perhaps most important, is *fervent* prayer. Persistent prayer. Ardent prayer. Because it works. Powerfully the Bible says. James 5:16b-18 – *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working*. [Great power. And then he gives us an example.]

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours [just like us], and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. [18] Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Acknowledging that we are utterly and completely dependent on God, just like Elijah, we pray fervently. And knowing that he answers, we pray expectantly. *For every good and perfect gift is from above*. (James 1:17)

So say it with me:

Believing that God hears and acts, we seek his will and ask for grace to meet our needs and impact the world.

➤ 4th, is . . .

Courageous Evangelism – In Word and Deed (Acts 4:18-21)

Evangelism, referring to the spread of the Gospel by public preaching or personal witness. A core value, because Jesus said, “*You will be my witnesses*.” Witnesses to the Good News of Jesus. The Gospel. Being a *witness* for Christ, is part and parcel of who we *are* in Christ.

And we ought to be courageous about it. Like the Apostles. Who said, “*we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*.” (Acts 4:20) We can’t help it. We’re compelled. Regardless of the consequences.

That’s the goal. *Courageous* evangelism. Wearing our walk with Jesus on our shirtsleeve. Letting our light shine no matter *what* the darkness or opposition. Talking the same with *unbelievers* as we do believers. And *acting* the same. That’s the deed part. *Showing* people the love of Christ.

Like we did last winter with the warming shelter we hosted. Or like some of our Small Groups did recently with the food pantry we support. Or like you do when you show mercy to someone. Or extend grace.

Acts of kindness, done in the name of Jesus, is evangelism in *deed*. Especially when we make it explicit. When we *tell* people that the love of Christ compels us. When we *name* his name. It’s word *and* deed.

All of which takes courage. Especially in this day and age, when more and more people think it’s *terrible* that we would share our faith.

I just read an article this morning, citing someone who said, “. . . any religion that believes others need to accept its message or face damnation is egotistical, intrusive, invasive, and intolerant.” Which of course is intolerant in and of itself. (Jim Denison blog post, 1/4/20)

But the point is that courageous evangelism requires more and *more* courage because it’s less and less tolerated. And retaining it as a core value is all the more important. Especially for those who think it’s so terrible.

So say it with me:

Believing that people are lost and Jesus saves, we share the Gospel and our lives boldly and urgently.

➤ 5th, is . . .

Intentional Discipleship – Personal and In Community (Eph 4:11-16)

Discipleship, because making disciples is an explicit part of our mission. And Eph 4:12 adds to it. *Equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.* As in, teach them how to live and minister to others, so that the church can go and grow. That's discipleship.

None of which happens by itself. Just like kids don't grow without *eating*, we don't grow without discipleship. Just like food doesn't magically appear on the *table*, discipleship doesn't magically happen in church. We have to be intentional. Intentional on our own, personally, as we read our Bible and pray each day; and intentional in *community* as we gather each week to worship, and learn, and encourage one another.

That's why we emphasize 4 main discipleship practices:

Worship in church

Grow in groups

Serve in ministry

Abide in Christ

Get those 4 practices *right*, and you'll go a long way toward intentional discipleship.

So say it with me:

Believing in God's design for ministry and maturity, we teach the Scriptures and equip the saints, to grow and do the same.

➤ And then last, is . . .

Strategic Church Planting – Together and Around the World (Rom 15:18-21)

Church planting, because that's what *Jesus* was about – *I will build my church*, he said (Mt 16:18) – and that's what *Paul* did. He planted churches. Strategically.

Like he says in **Rom 15:20-21** – *I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named... [that] those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.* He was strategic about it.

And so are we. Internationally, we focus on planting churches among low-reached or unreached people groups; while domestically, we focus on areas of need.

And on both fronts, we partner with others. The Great Commission Collective, The North American Mission Board, and Radius International. Even if we *can* plant churches all by ourselves, we don't. It's together and around the world.

So say it with me:

Believing in the promise of Jesus to build his church, we raise up and send out pastors to plant new churches, both locally and globally.

That's who we are and what we do. May God continue to use it, and use us, as we partner together for his glory.

Prayer – Father, impress these truths on our hearts, find us embracing them in our lives, and help us apply them in our church. Use this clarity to increase our conviction. And spur us on to greater love and good deeds.

You Are Loved