

5 Core values: 1 the Centrality of Christ
May 18th 2008

We are going to starting a series on the 5 core values of being Baptist people, but if we started there we would a) seem as though we were being divisive and 'separatist' and b) miss an opportunity to state the most foundational truths that Baptist churches are built on.

Paul Beasley Murray states 'at the heart of all Baptist believing is Jesus. The crucified and risen Lord Jesus is our supreme article of faith – compared with Jesus, all our Baptist distinctives are as nothing: Baptists are first and foremost Christians and only secondarily Baptists, and we all agree it is more important to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord than to belong to any particular group of Christians.'

Similarly we would never claim to have exclusive knowledge of saving truth. In fact this mornings subject, that Jesus is Lord, and he is central has as its most obvious implication that, Jesus is the one to whom we all must relate to first, and he is the one who not only unites Baptists to each other, but with all Christians everywhere.

So, having made the statement that Jesus is central, and has to be the starting place and common ground that we have with all believers, lets see what the Bible says about Jesus, and then apply this to ourselves as a Baptist church.

First Principles:

The Centrality of Christ

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God Phil 1.15-17

- He was before all creation
- He was the means of creation
- He was above all creation
- He was the reason for creation
- He holds creation together
- He is central to creation

Christ is first in everything Phil 1.18

- He is the 'Number One' in all creation
- He is the Head of the Church
- He is the firstborn from the dead
- He is the Source and Centre of everything

First Principles:

The Centrality of Christ

Our Identity

1. how do you know who you are? Being and Doing: both are in the Bible
 - a. if we do a thing consistently we tend to think it reflects who we are, but conversely
 - b. if we know who we are (our being / identity) this determines / limits / affects what we will do

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- c. "if we look at Baptists by what they **do** we see that we are a conscience ruled, dissenting group, who hold Christ, Scripture, baptism and church life as fundamental" HOWEVER
 - d. "if we start at the level of being, of identity, we can clarify our core values, and see what actions and practises are consistent with that.
 - e. If we are consistent / congruent / aligned, then our actions reveal our values, which in turn should reveal our identity – which for Christians should reveal Christ. Cp last week: what is on the inside will come out.
1. First and foremost, Baptist people claim to be a Christ-centred people. Having responded to his call to follow him, we now seek to walk by faith, shaping our life style around his teaching.
 2. "Because of the way we understand the biblical message, our Baptist emphasis is on trusting and following Jesus together in Christian discipleship. Our identity as Christian people is determined by the life of Jesus ... we are called to follow him, doing as he did and giving ourselves to God's loving purposes in the world ..."
 3. "Our core values must therefore flow from & reflect the nature of God as revealed in Jesus Christ – who he is, what he does, what he desires"

First Principles:

The Centrality of Christ

Our Identity
Our Thinking

2. so as learners / disciples / followers / apprentices of Christ we will find that Jesus demonstrates by example AND teaches in principle the actions / attitudes and values we are to adopt as his followers.
3. Our society and culture is different to 1st century Israel, so we will need to hold to the values, and seek to adapt the actions to the needs of our time.
4. however the commission in John 20.21 (as the Father sent me, so I send you) and the teaching 'as he is, so are we in the world' (1 John 4.17) indicates that we will be as radically different from our world as Jesus was from his.

First Principles:

The Centrality of Christ

Our Identity
Our Thinking
Our Actions

Over the next few weeks we will be looking at the 5 core values of the Baptist movement in this country. Intro to the 5 core values of the Baptist church. 10 years ago, but a fresh challenge to radical, biblical non-conformity: to being Baptists. It is important that we understand that this is an expression of the things we talked about last week that what is on the inside will come out