

5 core values 2

First principles 2: Community of Christ

Beasley-Murray "For Baptists the church is a community of believers gathered together out of the world, who have committed themselves to Christ and to one another."

First Principles:

The Community of Christ
in Matthews Gospel

Matt 4.18-22 Jesus **calls** individuals: always the starting point – personal response to Christ

- Jesus taught, trained, modelled and expected a community of faith – they were **called** to follow him; the Greek word is ekklesia, 'called out' like in OT Israel were called out of Egypt – once they were not a people, they were slaves, but when called them out they were set free and became the people of God – a nation under Gods leadership.
- Cp 1 Peter 2.2-10
- This is where we get the word ecclesiology: the study and doctrines of the church: a recognition that we are called to be a different kind of people

Matt 5.1-2 Jesus teaches his disciples within a large crowd setting

Matt 9.14-17 John's disciples recognise a distinct group identity

Matt 10 Jesus sends the disciples out together

Matt 16.13-20 First mention of 'Church' immediately after Peter's confession of Christ

The Community of Christ
in Matthews Gospel

Matt 18:

- 'Horizontal' attitudes (vs 1-5)
- Flock & individual (vs 10-14)
- Caring if it goes wrong (vs 15-20)
- Forgiveness in the family (vs 21-35)

The Community of Christ

So what can we learn?

- Community is God's idea
there is no place for a Christian to live in splendid isolation – in the creation, the one thing that God said was not good, is that man should be alone – part of our humanity is that we are to love and be loved, that we are to be connected with other people, and the body of Christ is powerful because it is

comprised of so many diverse members, it is a healing thing in our fractured & estranged society.

- We can 'walk together and watch over each other'

As we follow Jesus together we find that we need love, that we need to exercise forgiveness and that as a company of believers that we offer each other independence; by this I mean that we let each other grow, choose, exercise conscience – this way all our service is voluntary, it is not because of social pressure or conformity, but because we recognise that we can serve God by giving up our rights; this would make no sense if we didn't really have them. As Baptists we recognise that we are on a journey of faith, that we 'walk together and watch over each other' and yet, we are not all at the same point in our discipleship and understanding – that we set up some kind of group compliance which is the basis for whether a person is 'in' or 'out'

- We are not perfect

Nick said that one of the things that I would tell you is that at some point I will let you down – he is actually referring to one of the things I used to say when meeting to prepare someone for membership – I would tell them that we as a church would let them down, would disappoint them – that is natural, and inevitable; but what was most important is how they reacted to that: they could 'write off' the church, they could use it as an opportunity to stop coming, or they could learn from it, use it as a reminder that they are firstly following Christ and that they can grow in Christ likeness by sticking with us: we cannot grow in patience and love until we have people in our lives that are frustrating and un-lovely.

- We can accomplish more together

It also means that as diverse body we will be able to hold the same core values, but we will express them differently to each other in our day to day lives: but we also have the strength that together we have a greater voice, greater resources and ability to work for God in his world.

It is the same move of the Holy Spirit that saw the miracle of Pentecost and 3000 saved, that then forms this community who a) are Jesus centred, b) sharing and living a different kind of life, c) impacting society around them.

- **BUT**

Jesus Christ must be central or it is not Church

It may be religious, might be full of nice people who do good things, may even meet in a church building – but if the individuals are not seeking to follow Christ's call, and if Jesus is not the head, then it can't be his body. We won't be perfect, but we will be learning and growing – THAT is the adventure of discipleship – following Jesus together.