

First Baptist Church Of Evans City

Philosophy of Ministry

The Mission Statement of FBCEC:

The mission of First Baptist Church is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to baptize those who have been converted to Christ, and to disciple them through the teaching and modeling of Scripture so that every person may be presented mature in Christ.

1. Why a Philosophy of Ministry?

Ultimately, a philosophy of ministry serves as a theology of ministry. This document answers the whys of ministry. It is intended to focus on what the Scriptures say concerning the church and church ministry. A philosophy of ministry does not address every potential ministry program, but does address the basis for what the ministries of the local are intended to accomplish. Therefore, it is not a comprehensive ecclesiology, but a theology of ministry. This document provides the foundation for what First Baptist Church¹ does and may do in the future. It is the plumb line for church ministry. The ministry of the church applies the theory and thoughts presented in this document. The areas discussed in this document are non-negotiable. The purpose and activities in this document are explicitly mandated in Scripture. Therefore, this philosophy of ministry is timeless and always contemporary since the truths presented are timeless principles and mandates etched in the pages of Scripture. Everything that FBCEC does ought to be driven by the foundation that this philosophy of ministry establishes. Conversely, an unattached onlooker ought to gain a fairly accurate assessment of the philosophy of ministry of FBCEC by observing the ministries of the church.

The purposes of this philosophy of ministry are the following:

- Provide Unity

This philosophy of ministry provides unity of ministry for FBCEC. The body can unite around the vision the New Testament presents for the church. All members not only ought to be familiar with the philosophy of ministry but also be in agreement with it.

- Align Ministries

Every ministry in the church ought to be aligned with the philosophy of ministry. This document provides a foundation and basis for every potential ministry that might be proposed. For ministries already in existence, this document provides an accurate assessment by which to judge whether or not they are aligning with the New Testament vision for the Church.

- Allow Accurate Evaluation

How can FBCEC accurately evaluate the different ministries it runs? This document provides the answer to that question. Every ministry of the church ought to be frequently analyzed to make sure that it falls in the scope and direction provided by this philosophy of ministry.

- Weed Out Distraction

In an age of distraction, focus for the church is vital. Churches can very quickly become extremely distracted. This document provides an accurate, objective analysis of every ministry to keep distractions out of the church. Although all proposed ministries may not be sinful, they may not be expedient. By lining up ministry against this philosophy, distraction can quickly be removed.

¹ Designated "FBCEC" here on out.

2. Foundational Stones

Where does one begin when compiling a philosophy of ministry? There are certain presuppositions that provide foundational stones for a biblically accurate philosophy of ministry. These foundational stones determine the approach to this document. They are the following:

2.1. A High View of God

This document unapologetically presupposes a high view of God. A. W. Tozer poignantly notes, “What comes in to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about man is not what he at any given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.”² The God of the Bible is holy, righteous, merciful, and faithful. What truly matters in church ministry is ultimately what matters to God in church ministry. The church ought to emphasize what God emphasizes and minor on what God minors on. His instruction for the church always holds priority over tradition, cultural expectations, or pragmatic methodology.

- Holy

Since God is holy, the church must place a priority on holiness. Clinging to an inaccurate understanding of God’s holiness inevitably leads to an unwarranted tolerance for sin in the church.

- Righteous

Since God is righteous, all that He does is fair and just. Without an accurate view of God’s righteousness, the church will succumb to favoritism and unbiblical partiality. Preferential treatment will abound in a church that loses a sense of God’s righteousness.

- Merciful

One of the most blessed attributes of God is His mercy. Unfortunately, mercy has all but disappeared in many modern churches. Neglecting to communicate the mercy of God will result in a church characterized by critical attitudes, a lack of compassion and self-righteousness.

- Faithful

God is faithful to His people. Although the redeemed continually fail to honor God how they ought, He is faithful in His covenant with them. A church that forgets the faithfulness of God quickly develops a spirit of impatience with people and a prideful attitude of perfectionism.

The biggest danger in losing a high view of God in church ministry is that man-centered ministry quickly fills the vacuum created by this loss. Mere opinions and innovations of men supplement

² A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 1.

a biblical foundation for church ministries. Soon, instead of pursuing the pleasure of God, the church focuses its energy on pleasing men. The need of the moment will become what drives church ministry instead of God's purpose and plan for the church. Shallowness will become the norm instead of a deep, God honoring body of Christ. Therefore, maintaining a high view of God secures a God-ward focus for FBCEC resulting in a commitment to follow His plan for the church and to stay focused on what He would have us stay focused on.

2.2. An Affirmation of God's Word

A high view of God subsequently leads to a high view of God's Word. God's Word plays the most important role in developing a philosophy of ministry. This document assumes that the Word of God is inspired, inerrant, and authoritative in all that it says, including in regards to church ministry. John MacArthur rightly argues that one of the worst assaults on God's Word comes from people "who say they believe the Bible but don't know what it teaches. That is the subtlest kind of attack. People all across America say they believe the Bible from cover to cover but don't know one paragraph of it."³

The Word of God is sufficient (2 Tim 3:17; Heb 4:12). The sufficiency of the Bible is not limited to the sphere of the personal spiritual life. Rather, the Bible is completely sufficient for the sphere of church ministry as well. The Bible contains all that we need to know concerning what church ministry ought to look like and how it ought to operate. If we believe the Bible is truly sufficient, then what it tells us ought to be held in high regard. If FBCEC focused solely on what the Bible says and the ministries that it presents, would FBCEC deem that sufficient for contemporary church ministry? The Bible is completely sufficient for church ministry.

The Word of God is not only sufficient, but also completely relevant (2 Tim 3:7; Ps 19; 119:105). In other words, the Bible is not an outdated, irrelevant ancient text that had cultural relevance during the time of its composition but does not bear the same relevance in today's culture. If the Bible is not relevant, then the church ought to abandon it and follow the latest trend in current church culture. The result will then be the positioning of experience over the Bible. Experience will dominate not only the teaching of Scripture but the ministry of the church. Then, it is only a small step for the church to quickly fade into the secular culture and thinking.

Affirming God's Word places the Scriptures at a central place in church ministry. The Bible becomes the manual for what should and should not be done in the ministry. A commitment to the truth ought to dominate the culture of FBCEC, and will be evidenced by its role in all the various ministries.

³ John MacArthur, Jr. *The Master's Plan for the Church*, 26-7.

2.3. An Accurate View of Man

With God and His Word held high, an accurate view of man is then possible. Holding to an accurate, biblical view of man aids in developing an accurate, biblical view of church ministry. The Bible accurately pin points who man is and what his greatest need is. Grasping this focuses the ministry of the church in how best to reach that need.

The Scripture confronts man with two important realities: 1) Man is totally depraved (Rom 3:10-12; Jer 17:9-10). Therefore, the message that the church preaches cannot be manipulated in the hope that men will receive it. 2) Man was originally created to glorify God, but glorifies self (Rom 3:23). Unless continually monitored, the natural tendency of the church slips toward self-worship instead of God-worship. As Voltaire aptly put it: “God created man in His image, and man has forever been trying to return the favor.”

Lacking an accurate, biblical view of man, the church is bound to fade into focusing on the “felt needs” of men instead of on the real needs that the Bible addresses. Rather than holiness being the focus of the church, self-improvement will be elevated to a place of prominence. In short, a church that has an accurate view of man will pursue God for direction and guidance, completely relying on the Holy Spirit to accomplish any spiritual good.

2.4. Godly Qualified Leaders

The last foundational stone that directs our philosophy of ministry is godly, qualified, male leaders.⁴ Too often, the church appoints church leaders haphazardly, merely following a constitution for legal purposes. But in Scripture, the call to church leadership is a high calling, not to be taken lightly.

Church leaders are called to model true Christian character to the body of Christ (1 Thess 2:4-12; 1 Tim 3:1-3; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 1:1-5) and to equip the body of Christ to carry out the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). Such a high calling ought to create a sense of reservation and intimidation for any believer filling this role. But God uses Godly, qualified leaders to accomplish His work in the church. Listen to J. Oswald Sanders:

“Churches grow in every way when they are guided by strong, spiritual leaders with the touch of the supernatural radiating in their service. The church sinks into confusion and malaise without such leadership. Today those who preach with majesty and spiritual power are few, and the booming voice of the church has become a pathetic whisper. Leaders today – those who are truly spiritual – must take to heart their responsibility to pass on the torch to younger people as a first-line duty.”⁵

⁴ The leaders being addressed in this section are elders, not every possible leadership position.

⁵ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 18.

Failure in the church to have qualified leaders leads to an unbiblical view of discipleship, skewed ministry priorities, resulting in only the “faithful” doing the work of the ministry. The Bible withers into simply a spiritual resource, as the nitty gritty of church ministry is informed by the current trends and opinions of the popular church movers and shakers. David Wells notes that these types of leaders, “while they tip their hats in the direction of the Bible, quickly look the other way when they get down to the serious business of devising technique for the Church’s life.”⁶

Godly, qualified leaders focus attention on God’s priorities as presented in God’s Word. They are committed to personal holiness as well as the corporate holiness of the church. The result? Conflict/resolution will find its proper place in the life of the body, allowing the body to grow in unity and providing a shining light to a dark world. Godly, qualified leaders are an essential foundation for a biblical philosophy of ministry.

1. What is the Church?

One more presupposition that must be addressed before composing a philosophy of church ministry is found in the answer to the following question: what is the church? The word church conjures up different nuances in people’s minds: an institution, a gathering place, an event, a society, or a business. In contrast, the biblical view of the church is quite specific.

1.1. The Word Church

The word translated “church” in the New Testament occurs 114 times, only two of those times in the Gospels. In secular Greek, the word church (ἐκκλησία) referred to an assembly or gathering of people to conduct the government business in the local community. They did not focus their use of this word on where the assembly met, but on the assembling itself. The New Testament uses the word this way in Acts 19:32, 34 and 41.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), this word is found 103 times. In almost every use it is in reference to the gathering of the Israelites. Like secular Greek, the focus of the word in the Septuagint is on the gathering of people, not the location or the activity for which they were gathering.

So, when the word “church” is found in the New Testament, the same connotation is intended. The emphasis for the word church in the New Testament is on the people who assemble. They assemble in local assemblies. What makes a New Testament church a church is that it is an assembly of redeemed people. The New Testament understanding of the word church is that of a local assembling comprised of participants in the universal body of Christ.

⁶ David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology*, 109.

1.2. The Use of “Church” in Acts

The book of Acts uses the word church almost exclusively for a gathering of the redeemed. The first time that Luke pens this word (5:11), he does so in reference to the gathering of the believers that he has been developing in the following passages: 1:12-14; 2:41-42, 47; and 4:4. Therefore, the church is ultimately for believers, not unbelievers. The “church” met as believers for the sake of fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer, and with a commitment to the Apostles’ teaching (2:42).

So, the church refers to the gathering of believers, not unbelievers. The focus of the ministry of the church ought to be for believers, not unbelievers. In conclusion, when the New Testament refers to the church, it is referring to people, not an institution, society, gathering place, or business.

A Philosophy of Ministry

2. The Purpose of the Church

What is the purpose of the church? The answer to this important question focuses the ministry of the church. Comprehending purpose of the church’s existence underlies the function which drives its existence.

2.1. The Glory of God

The ultimate purpose for the existence of the church is that it brings God glory. Isaiah 42:8 reveals that God desires glory and is jealous for His glory (cf. Isa 48:9-11). God called out the Israelites as a nation and chose them to be His special people, so that He might get glory. He created His special people for His own glory (Isa 43:7). Paul declares in Romans 10:36 that all glory is due His name. Ultimately, everything exists for the glory of God. This is the reason why redeemed men and women are exhorted to do all things for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). In this sense, the church’s purpose for its existence closely aligns with the purpose behind the existence of mankind. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”⁷ How does the church bring glory to God? The church brings glory to God in two very specific ways in Scripture.

⁷ G. I. Williamson, *The Shorter Catechism*, 1:1.

2.2. Invokes Heavenly Worship

Ephesians 3:10 says, “So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” Paul reveals that the church uncovers the wisdom of God to the angelic world. Harold Hoehner notes, “This was a revolutionary new concept. Through the church, the angelic leaders, both good and evil, gain knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God.”⁸ In other words, God uses the church to reveal His wisdom to the angelic world in order that He might receive glory through their resonating praise to the revealed wisdom. The church invokes heavenly worship to the praise of God’s glory.

2.3. A Body of Worship

Secondly, God redeems men and women for the praise of His glory. Three times in Paul’s extensive discourse on salvation in Ephesians 1:3-14 he provides a glimpse of the purpose behind salvation: the praise of God’s glory (1:6, 12, 14). Earlier, he reminded the Roman readers in Romans 15:9 that God redeems Gentiles so that they “might glorify God for his mercy.” Revelation 5:11-14 pictures a heavenly chorus of the redeemed praising God for His mercy. The church is the earthly choir. The church glorifies God by becoming a body of worship. Therefore, it exists to worship God to the praise of His glory.

The glory of God must be given its proper place of prominence when considering church ministry. John Piper emphasizes this reality, “If the pursuit of God’s glory is not ordered above the pursuit of man’s good in the affections of the heart and the priorities of the church, man will not be well served, and God will not be duly honored.”⁹ Without concerted effort, the glory of God will quickly be forgotten in the pursuit of church ministry. God’s glory is ultimately why the church does what it does.

FBCEC exists for the glory of God. We are here as a body to glorify God. We glorify God by revealing the wisdom of God to the angelic host, resulting in their praise; and we glorify God by functioning as a body of worship bringing praise to God in all that is done. “Worship is central in the existence of the church. The words of the apostle Paul that God has chosen and predestined sons unto Himself in Christ ‘to the praise of the glory of his grace’ (Eph 1:4-6) suggests that the ultimate purpose of the church is the worship of the one who called it into being.”¹⁰

⁸ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 462.

⁹ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 36.

¹⁰ Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 166.

3. Getting Worship Right

If worship to the glory of God is the ultimate reason for the church, then the New Testament must shape our understanding of what true worship entails. Unfortunately, in contemporary culture, worship has been reduced to merely an event, a day of the week, or a style of music. In reality, the Bible presents a much broader, more comprehensive understanding of worship. Romans 12:1-2 provides this broad understanding of worship: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2 reveals that worship is a lifestyle, not an activity. All of life is worship, not simply a designated part of our lives. All Christians are called to present their bodies to the Lord in worship. This is accomplished through the renewing of our minds, resulting in a change of lifestyle. Clearly, worship is more than an activity. “Worship is at the center of everything that the church believes, practices, and seeks to accomplish,” writes Warren Wiersbe.¹¹ Therefore, how FBCEC obeys the Lord’s directives for the church in Scripture correlates directly to our faithfulness in worshipping our God. Worship is an obedient response to all that God has commanded. Worship is life.

3.1. First Baptist Church: Worship is Life

Since FBCEC exists to worship God through obedience to His revealed will and through the praise of His name, it is important to get right what God calls the church to do. We are called to worship, and we are called to worship through praise and obedience. What does this look like? The answer lies in what follows.

4. How We Worship

4.1. Mission

The greatest way that FBCEC worships God is through fulfilling the mission that He has called every true church to fulfill. This mission is the same mission that Jesus left the disciples before ascending into heaven. In four different places in Scripture, Christ provided the disciples with the mission of the church.

Matthew 28:19-20 - “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of

¹¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, 17.

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Luke 24:44-49 - “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’”

John 20:21 - “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’”

Acts 1:7-8 - “He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’”

These passages delineate the mission that Jesus left His disciples, not only the eleven but also the subsequent men and women who would become true disciples of Christ. By combining together the concepts in these passages, it becomes quite lucid what Christ’s mission for the church is. The mission of the church is to make disciples. And therefore, the fulfillment of this mission ought to be the main expression of obedient worship for the church. Kevin DeYoung summarizes these passages well: “The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and into eternity to the glory of God the Father.”¹²

The Mission Statement of FBCEC: The mission of First Baptist Church is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to baptize those who have been converted to Christ, and to disciple them through the teaching and modeling of Scripture so that every person may be presented mature in Christ.

The mission of the church given by Jesus can be broken down into the following parts:

4.1.1. Evangelism

Evangelism is the first step in the discipleship process. Evangelism sums up the mission that Christ gave in both Luke 24 and Acts 1. In order for the full scope of discipleship to take place, there must be conversion. In order for the possibility of conversion, there must be the proclamation of the Gospel (Rom. 10:14-15). Evangelism is what the members of the Church

¹² Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 62.

engage in with the sphere of the world that God has called them to, not simply designated as a ministry of the church.

4.1.2. Baptism

Baptism is an expression of worship. But it rightly fits under the mission of the church, since it was singled out by Christ in the Matthew 28 mission passage. Baptism refers to initiation and correctly follows conversion. Peter declares in Acts 2:38, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Baptism is not simply the first step of obedience, but the declaration of the inner change that has taken place in conversion (Rom 6:1-4). How important is baptism? F. F. Bruce observes that in the New Testament “the idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained.”¹³

4.1.3. Discipleship

The verb that Jesus used in Matthew 28:19 for the church’s mission is “make disciples” (μαθητεύω). That is the only command in the whole commission. The ultimate job and ministry of the church is discipleship. After conversion, a person is brought into the church through baptism and then the process of discipleship starts. Discipleship is a life on life activity. The following activities play a vital role in discipleship:

- Teaching

Discipleship is teaching the body of Christ to observe all of Scripture. This includes both formal teaching and informal teaching as well as the embodiment of the message. Jesus included teaching in the mission of the church, and therefore the Word plays an important role in the discipleship process.

- Discipline

Unfortunately, the modern, evangelical church has abandoned biblical, church discipline. But a commitment to church discipline demonstrates a serious commitment to a pure worship of the body of Christ and to the mission of the church. 1 Peter 1:14-16 declares, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” The holiness that Peter calls his readers to applies to the church as well. The church illustrates the Gospel to a sinful world, so holiness is key to this illustration.

Why place church discipline under the heading of discipleship? Since the goal of discipleship is conformity to Christ likeness, so the goal of church discipline is conformity to holiness in both the individual being disciplined and the corporate church body. Mark Dever notes,

¹³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 70.

“Discipline is inextricably bound up with the church Jesus envisioned. But that discipline should not occur alone. Rather, it should occur as one part of a larger commitment by the entire church to pray and work for another’s formation in Christ.”¹⁴ Therefore, when Jesus institutes discipline in Matthew 18:15-17, the purpose is ultimately to win the brother back (cf. Gal 6:1-2; 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15). But if the individual fails to adequately respond like a believer would respond (i.e., in repentance), then the holiness of the church takes priority through the removal of the individual from the body (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:5; Tit 3:10).

- Training

Part of the discipleship process includes training. “By far the best way to build a congregation full of disciple-making disciples is to assemble and train a band of co-workers to labour alongside you.”¹⁵ Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The goal of training is two fold: to equip the Saints to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12) and to train men that will be able to teach the body (2 Tim 2:2). This is implied in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) and by the example of Paul, who continually called other believers to follow his example (Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 4:14-17; 10:32-11:1; 1 Thess 1:4-7).

4.1.4. Word

The word of God plays a major role in the New Testament picture of worship. Since worship for the church includes discipleship, this makes sense. One of the greatest ways that God conforms believers more and more into the image of Christ, resulting in a life fulfilled with praise, is through the influencing control of the Word in their lives (Jas 1:19-25; 1 Pet 2:2). The word functions in worship through the following ways (this is not comprehensive):

4.1.5. Preaching

The pattern of Paul and the apostles of the early church placed a high priority on the role of preaching in the worship of the early church. Over thirty different Greek words in the New Testament convey the idea of teaching and preaching.¹⁶ The early church was highly committed to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42). The mandate for preaching in New Testament worship is found in the following passages: Matthew 28:20; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2; and Titus 2:1. Although the modern church fails to place a priority on preaching, the church greatly needs a revival of biblical, expository preaching. Walter Kaiser observes,

¹⁴ Mark Dever, *The Church*, 66.

¹⁵ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 116.

¹⁶ Gerhard Friedrich, “κηρύσσω”, *TDNT*, 3:703.

“In the midst of all the feverish activity to restore the church once again to her former position of influence and respect, all sorts of programs and slogans have appeared. But regardless of what new directives and emphases are periodically offered, that which is needed above everything else to make the Church more viable, authentic, and effective, is a new declaration of the Scriptures with a new purpose, passion, and power.”¹⁷

4.1.6. Public Reading

Not only does preaching enable the church to worship in the Word as a body, but also does the public reading of the Word. Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:13, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture...” Paul told both the Colossian believers (Col 4:16) and the Thessalonian believers (1 Thess 5:27) to read his letters to the church. The early church read the Scriptures in its worship services, and therefore, the modern church ought to devote itself to the public reading of Scripture.

4.1.7. Praise

Typically, the contemporary Church defaults to think of worship in terms of praise. Therefore, praise naturally finds its place in the worship of the church. “Scripture plainly teaches that God’s people are not only to speak, but also to sing, the truth of God (e.g., 1 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 33:2-3; Col. 3:16). So music is an important part of worship.”¹⁸ The people of God are continually exhorted in Scripture to sing to the Lord (Ps. 33:2-3; 67:4; 145-150). The heavenly picture presents the redeemed community singing praises to Jesus (Rev 5). Surprisingly, the New Testament says very little concerning praise with direct reference to the church. The parallel passages of Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16 are the only passages specifically exhorting the church to sing. This is quite ironic when one thinks of the places of prominence that the modern church has delegated to music. Regardless, praise rightly functions as an expression of worship for the church.

4.1.8. Prayer

The New Testament church is a praying church. The same ought to be true today. The church in the book of Acts is recorded as praying in 1:24; 4:24-30; 12:5, 12; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:15, 40; 20:36; 21:5, 8. The early church devoted itself to prayer in the same way they were devoted to the Apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42). Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:8, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.” Allen Ross notes, “Just as private prayer is basic to the spiritual life, so corporate prayer is at the heart of the

¹⁷ Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 242.

¹⁸ John Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 111.

worship and service of the congregation.”¹⁹ If the church is going to follow the example of the early church, then prayer must be given a proper place in its worship.

4.1.9. Lord’s Supper

The purpose of this document does not allow for an expansive analysis of the nuances of the Lord’s Supper and its relationship to the “Agape” feast of the New Testament. Regardless, the Lord’s Supper played a predominant role in the worship of the early church. Jesus told His disciples after the last supper to “do this in remembrance of me” in Luke 22:19. Paul reiterated this truth and established the Lord’s Supper as a mandated act of worship in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 (cf. Matt 26:26-29 and Mark 14:22-25). Acts 2:42 reveals that the Lord’s Supper/Agape Feast was one of the four featured activities of the early church. The phrases “breaking of bread” (Acts 20:7, 11) and “communion of the Body of Christ” (1 Cor 10:16b) are used in the New Testament in reference to this practice. The Lord’s Supper remembers and proclaims the Lord’s death until He returns (1 Cor 11:26),²⁰ providing a visible picture of the Gospel. The modern church must participate in the Lord’s supper. Assuming as we have that the church is made up of believers, the participants of the Lord’s Supper are believers as well. Paul makes it clear that to participate in the Lord’s Supper, one has already participated in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16).²¹

4.1.10. Service

The church worships God through serving each other. The gathering of the body allows for a context in which service may take place, but it should not be limited to merely the times when the church gathers. Christ provided our example of service by His self-sacrificial love (Mark 10:45; John 13:1-20). In response, we ought to use our freedom in Christ not “as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal 5:13). The body expresses its commitment to worshipping God through how it communicates loving service to others (1 John).

4.1.11. Spiritual Gifts

The exercise of spiritual gifts fits under the idea of service since the main function of spiritual gifts is the exaltation of Christ through the building up of the body (1 Cor 14:26) for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). The Spirit delegates the differing gifts for the good of the body (1 Cor

¹⁹ Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 447.

²⁰ Concerning the idea of remembrance in the Lord’s Supper, Ralph Martin makes the helpful observation: “To recall, in biblical thought means to transport an action which is buried in the past in such a way that its original potency and vitality are not lost, but are carried over into the present” (*Worship in the Early Church*, 43-4).

²¹ “Paul taught the Corinthians that participating in the Supper testifies to participating in Christ’s Body and blood” (Mark Dever, *The Church*, 38).

12:11). These gifts are considered part of God's grace (Eph 4:7) since they are part of God's gracious work in the members of the body. The New Testament does not focus on the specific number of gifts,²² rather the goal of the spiritual gifts: the unifying and building up of the body of Christ.

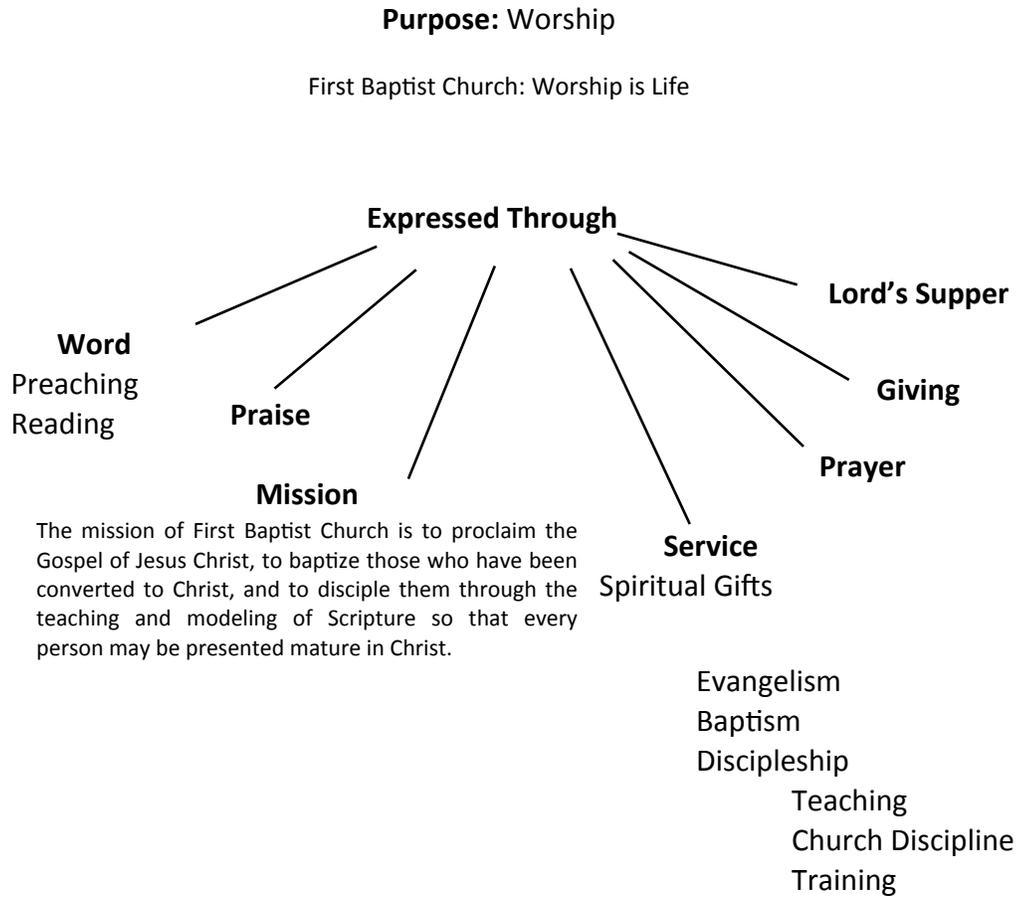
4.1.12. Giving

The last expression of worship for the body of Christ that the New Testament provides is how we sacrificially give of our earthly possessions. The early church quickly developed an attitude of sacrificial giving (Acts 2:44-45) in order that each member of the body would be taken care of physically. Failure to adequately disseminate the given resources quickly became a problem necessitating the Apostles remedy (Acts 6). Paul instructs the Corinthian church to "put something aside and store it up" on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2). This collection was designed to help the destitute believers in Jerusalem (vv. 1-4). The writer of Hebrews exhorts, "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" (Heb 13:16). Giving became an expression of one's gratitude for God's grace (2 Cor 9:6-8).²³ Giving in the New Testament is not solely limited to the destitute, but also to the workers of the Gospel (the "double honor" of 1 Tim 5:17 and Paul's argument of 1 Cor 9:1-18). The way we give reveals what our heart worships.

²² The specific list of spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. By the time of 1 Peter, Peter simply focuses on the two types of gifts: spoken and service (1 Peter 4:10-11). Wayne Grudem provides the following working definition of a spiritual gift: "A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church" (*Systematic Theology*, 1016).

²³ "Our giving is a reflexive response to the grace of God in our lives. It doesn't come out of our altruism or philanthropy - it comes out of the transforming work of Christ in us. This grace is the action; our giving is the reaction" (Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*, 31).

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