

Series: Side by Side
Message Title: **Four Indispensable Principles**
Date: Sunday, January 14, 2018
Scripture: Acts 16
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Introduction

This was an incredible football season for the Georgia Bulldogs. The National Championship game was unforgettable (though heartbreaking)... commendations to all Crimson Tide fans. The way young Tua Tagovailoa played and handled himself was worthy of respect by everyone. His quick, clear and convictional effort to give glory to Christ was positive and strong. I found consolation in the glory of God even when I was disappointed by the outcome of the game.

Somehow this was a parable in life for us all. We find consolation and confidence in the glory of God even when life doesn't not turn out the way we hoped or planned.

It is time to put the game and this season behind us and move ahead with confidence, joy and faith!

Today, I want to go back to our play book for life (the Bible) and dig a little deeper into Acts 16 before we advance further in Philippians in the coming weeks. In addition to the beautiful picture of side by side ministry, there are some key characteristics of this church from its founding we must understand and observe.

Acts 16 = Paul and Timothy, Macedonian Call

“So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days” (Acts 16:11-12 ESV).

“And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well,

she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us" (Acts 16:13-15 ESV).

They arrived in the city to share Christ, and all this was initiated by prayer. Jews met outside the city because there was no synagogue—number of Jews were small. They were not fully respected or honored—seen as sectarian group in Rome.



1. Dependency

The secret to any church's usefulness to God is reliance upon His power, His work and His movement in the lives of people around them, even as He works in us. Side by side ministry is not leaning on each other, but leaning into the Lord together!

Paul got to Philippi by the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking" (Acts 6:10 ESV).

“direct voyage” (driven by the wind). God’s Spirit moves and guides our lives. “Take the gospel to Philippi.”

“God was working out His plan to get the gospel to the ends of the earth, and He was using ordinary guys to fulfill this mission, directing them by His gracious providence and the Spirit’s leadership.” —Merida and Chan

God closes doors and opens doors, and they are all part of His providential work in us for His ultimate will for us. The key is this: Let’s not focus so much on our plans, but let our focus be on God’s faithful guidance to lead us.

Is God prompting your heart? Is there an appeal today saying, “Come and help us?” We must all respond to God’s call! I cannot grow a church without you and you cannot grow as a church without pastoral leadership, but ultimately, nothing happens in the church without the Holy Spirit of God.

As you read through Paul’s letters, you cannot overlook or escape his personal dependence

upon and commitment to prayer for the churches he established and challenged.

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you... And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God... for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance” (Philippians 1:3, 9-11, 19 ESV).

... “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6 ESV).

Prayer was both a priority and also something that permeated the ministry of Paul. Why? Paul knew his absolute dependency upon God. Today churches think, *“We can with God’s help.”* The first century church? *“We can’t without God.”*

“It’s not my ability but my response to God’s ability that counts.” —Corrie Ten Boom

God led. They followed. God worked and moved as only God can. This is dependency and it is an indispensable principle of side by side ministry.

2. Diversity

You’ve met Lydia—a seller of purple goods, a business woman. She had some status and obviously was somewhat prosperous because she invited a mission team to come and stay at her house. She started her day as a typical Jew doing religious activity, but went to bed a follower of Christ! She received and believed the Gospel!

“As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.’ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I

command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out that very hour” (Acts 16:16-18 ESV).

The demon-possessed slave girl could not have been more unlike Lydia, but here she is (the second recorded conversion in Philippi). God is gathering His church not out of “like people” but “unlikely people.” There was a battle for her soul and body. Warfare! God can and does change the lives of tormented people.

“But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, ‘These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.’ The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods” (Acts 16:19-22 ESV).

“And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.

Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:23-25 ESV).

God moved his men into prison and then God moved in the heart, (shaking) the prison guard to bring him to saving faith in Christ.

"Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house (Acts 16:30-32 ESV).

Believe! What does this mean? It was evident in the lives of each of these people even though each conversion experience was different:

Acts 16:14 = the Lord opened Lydia's heart

Acts 16:18-19 = the spirit was gone

Believe!

If there is any place that diversity should be evident, it is in the church. We have one

common denominator beyond all the issues of place, face and race—GRACE!

Diversity in the Church at Philippi

Lydia	Business Woman	Enthusiastic
Fortune Teller	Demon-Possessed	Antagonistic
Jailer	Prison Guard	Sadistic

Diversity within the church is so important in a day when diversity continues to be such a point of conflict and rancor in our world. No doubt we are different and have many different backgrounds, perspectives, experiences and challenges, but the grace of God gathers the church, and everybody is somebody in His body.

One of the greatest obstacles to the validity and witness of the church in my day and time has been the horrible, ugly, sinful cancer of racial segregation and separation in the church.

While this concern and debate continues today, I have lived this and born the scars of this since my childhood. I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. I was a 10-year-old boy when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated

April 4, 1968, on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel—Downtown Memphis. This event scared the history of my city and lingers as a reminder to the terror of prejudice in the human heart.

As a teenager, I began my first jobs and quickly entered an integrated work force (furniture delivery, Haven Furniture, Elvis Presley Blvd.). In Arkansas, I walked into a convenience store and the man behind counter look at me and said about my co-worker, "We don't allow any N-----s in here." I felt shame, rage, guilt, etc.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Psalm 139:23-24 ESV).

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." —Martin Luther King

I applaud the action taken by President Trump this week about a MLK memorial national park, but prejudice is not a matter for civil rights' leaders, politicians

or presidents; it is a matter that must be addressed and action taken in the church!

Throughout my ministry, I have given great care and concern to be intentional about not allowing racial differences to keep the church from thriving and growing, privately or publicly. This was vital in the first century and it is so today in this every changing culture. People deserve dignity, not because I say so, but because God's grace declares we are created *imago Dei*. Then Christ came to redeem and declare us righteous through faith.

To this end, we need to honor our differences and not attack them. The key to health in a church is the harmony of its members working together and appreciating diversity. There are different gifts, personalities, roles, experiences, stages of life, struggles and cultures, but in Christ all this is harnessed for holiness and wholeness of our gospel witness.

"Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your

subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” —Martin Luther King

We have been blessed to add an Asian fellowship here at Warren. Not for the sake of diversity, but for the sake of the gospel—people in need of Christ and His salvation. Lydia, demon girl, jailers, and more!
“Everybody is somebody and Jesus Christ is Lord!”

Warren Church, we must seek to do life in community together in the church of Jesus Christ.

“O God, unite us, I pray! Change us! Use us together as the church of Christ in this generation. Don’t let us be shackled by racial division, but united in the power of grace, hope and love.”

Our mission is greater than all that brings division.

“It’s amazing how little you complain in the church when you’re reaching out to lost people. Evangelism stirs up your passion for

Jesus, produces holiness, and yields hatred for sin. And, its amazing who will say 'Yes' to Jesus when you speak the gospel!" —Tony Merida and Francis Chan

The church presents unity through diversity in demonstration of the power of the gospel of Christ. We need to pray for and pursue people who may be outsiders in our world of the church in order that the church may reflect the power of Christ alive in the world to change hearts and unite peoples for His glory.

People who have faced hurt, abuse, human trafficking... children who are left to a foster system without home and hope... women who have faced unplanned pregnancies... people with alcohol, drug and substance abuse issues... people who have been jailed... and those who rule in courts. All of these are in our city and they all need Jesus—the up and out and the down and out. We must “win” them in the name of Jesus.

“The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But... the good

Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'" —Martin Luther King

3. Defense

"When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here'" (Acts 16:27-28 ESV).

Paul stood up for a man who was desperate enough to commit suicide. Before it was all over, the man was not dead, but adopted! This jailer and his family became part of the family of God.

Paul could have chosen to hate this sadistic man, but instead, Paul protected and defended his life. Law would have expected and even demanded death for letting prisoners escape, but Paul preserved his life.

Why is this so important? One of the great works of the church is to stand side by side in the defense of truth and for life.

Every January, we have Sanctity of Life Sunday. It is a time when we remember and resolve to continue to battle in defense of life. There is no question that God's Word speaks of God as the Author of life, the Defender of the fatherless and widows, and that God warns against the shedding of innocent blood. The Bible presents the strongest case in the totality of history for the worth, dignity and value of human life.

Yet each year, the charge remains to confront fathers who impregnate and abandon mothers who think disposal and removal of a fetus can overcome the presence of a child they will always remember and the guilt, shame and scars that remain over a lifetime.

And, in light of what I just said to you, no human life is without dignity or worth regardless of skin color, age, intelligence, disability or economic status. Human life is valuable by God's decree and it is so very vulnerable because of human sinfulness and evil.

Some of you will recall in August 2015, I addressed the matter of life and then

gathered with others to pray publicly. Although the Planned Parenthood clinic closed, the battle to defend life continues in our community. Not far from our campus there is another clinic that performs abortions: Preferred Women's Health Clinic.

Year after year I am burdened and compelled to address this matter because of what happens to the body of a baby, what happens in the body of a mother, and what happens to a society and culture that affirms this action as a right rather than facing the evil and cruelty of such action.

Children should not be aborted; they need to be adopted!

Pray for hearts to change, lives of innocent babies to be saved, and the minds and hearts of women (deceived into believing death for a baby is a way forward for freedom) will be changed by truth and trust in Christ.

The church must be ready and willing to stand and say, "Don't harm yourself, for we are all here." Acts 16:28

4. Declaration

In the earliest days and among the first steps, people were baptized. This was not an optional part of the Christian life. It was foundational as it marked people as followers of Christ. Baptism has not changed; it marks us as followers of Christ today.

Baptism is the collective identification that we are followers of Christ. It is the same for all; it is not just for some. It is and continues to be the way we declare Christ both personally and collectively.

“And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house” (Acts 16:31-32 ESV).

Baptism was important then and it is just as important today. Why? “Baptism is the public declaration of surrender to Christ and identification with Christ for every true believer.”

Quick Overview of Baptism:

- Baptism was ordained, commanded by Christ Himself.

We did not come up with the idea of baptism, God did, and He made it explicit in His Word.

“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 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’” (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV).

- Baptism expresses our union with Christ.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4 ESV).

Death...Burial ...Resurrection. This is a sermon itself.

- Baptism is for every believer, not just for some.
- Baptism is in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—not just bathing or any other kind of immersion.

The baptism of each of these new converts was at the heart of life-transformation and created the story of the church. The storyline of our church is broadened and strengthened every time someone declares faith and fellowship of Christ.

Faith is the beginning and end of this chapter and each of the principles I have outlined today.

As we close this message today, I am asking you to see and share a vision of side by side ministry in dependency, in diversity, in defense and in declaration.