

## Five Antioch Values, Part One

- 1 Timothy 3:14-16
- I heard a speaker 5 or 6 years ago say that what we value as a church will be the determining factor for our products and practices, in other words, what we do and what we produce. Our goal as a church is to produce maturing disciples of Jesus Christ, so what we value will affect that in a strong way. I would like to take these next three Sundays, before we start our study of 1 Peter, to remind you about five things that we highly value at Antioch. I believe these values contribute to Antioch being a healthy, biblical church.
- Let me hasten to say that these are not values for us in the sense that no one else is doing these or believes these. Not at all. We know we are not the 'only one' and we must never presume that we are doing it all right and everybody else has problems. But because the household of God is the church of the living God, Christians need to think clearly and biblically about what the church believes and lives out. As we saw in the text today, the church stands solely upon the Gospel, which Paul summarizes in poetic fashion in verse 16: "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." That's the foundation upon which everything we do rests. There is no other foundation except Jesus Christ. Upon that foundation, we build every week and every time we gather in the following ways. Let's look at two values today that we hold dear: Biblical worship and expository preaching.
- **Biblical Worship**
- Jesus said to the woman at the well, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him." (John 4:23) Worshipping God in spirit and in truth is biblical worship, and that's what we want to do here every time we gather.
- I like Bob Kauflin's definition of worship: "Christian worship is the response of God's redeemed people to His self-revelation that exalts God's glory in Christ in our minds, affections, and wills, in the power of the Holy Spirit." It is a response to God's "worth-ship," for his glory, and with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength.
- Worship is not confined to a place or a set time in the week. We exist to worship God daily and we are committed to growing in that when we gather here on Sunday. Worship is not confined to singing songs either to or about God, but that is certainly an important part of worship. But our worship of God with the body of Antioch starts every Sunday when we walk in the door, and doesn't end until we walk out! Our corporate worship ramps up with Vic offering a call, an invitation, to come into his presence. It continues as we lift up our voices in praise.
- There's freedom here to worship the Lord as the Spirit of God leads. We value that freedom. One comment I constantly hear from people who come to Antioch for the first time is how much they love the singing, and that the people, including the men, are singing with all their hearts. There is freedom here to lift your hands to the Lord, or to choose not to lift your hands. Either is fine, as long as we are lifting our hearts to him. We have had a short list of worship leaders in our 30 years, really only about 4 or 5 people, and each one has felt the freedom to lead us in singing in his own way. But each has encouraged us to worship God with all our might, and for that we are grateful.
- Worship continues as we lift up our hearts and our attention to the preaching of God's Word. More on that in the next point.
- Another freedom to worship God is on display every Sunday when we pass around a microphone and give anyone in here an opportunity to worship the Lord by encouraging the rest of us with a testimony. Or a thanksgiving. Last Sunday was a wonderful reminder of how powerful that ministry is, and how important. Right? It went on for a long time because our hearts were full of joyful thanksgiving to the Lord for what He is doing. I have had other church leaders tell me over and over through the years, when they hear that we do this every Sunday, that it sounds crazy. *Aren't you afraid*

someone will take advantage of that and start talking and never stop? Or what if someone says something just plain wrong or even unbiblical? I always say, "The greater danger is not allowing for it at all, because then you are training the church to believe that the Sunday morning service is a spectator sport. It's for the 'trained professionals,' and instead of coming to the service on Sunday ready to serve or to share, if the Lord allows, you come ready ONLY to sit and listen." And if someone says something unbiblical in sharing time, which honestly is as rare as an NC State championship, the elders have been known to gently and lovingly correct that. We each come to church as ministers. Paul said something about this in 1 Cor. 14, that whenever we come together, EACH ONE has something ready to share. As we learn to hear the Lord's voice, then we know whether we should take the mic that morning and share, or not. We can trust the Lord to lead us.

- One of the questions in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is, "What do you understand by the 'communion of the saints'?" The answer is, "First, that believers one and all, as members of Christ the Lord, have communion with him and share in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members." I love that. From the beginning of the service to the end, we worship God through praise, through the Word, through prayers, through words of encouragement, through giving of our tithes and offerings, and through fellowship. We worship Him in Spirit, and Jesus said the Father seeks those who worship him. And we worship him in truth.
- Truth applies to everything we do and say here, but it especially applies to what is preached. That's the next value we treasure at Antioch:

- **Expository preaching**

- What is expository preaching? Here are two definitions I like. **John Stott:** Exposition refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor opens what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds what is tightly packed. (*Between Two Worlds*) **Alistair Begg:** Unfolding the text of Scripture in such a way that makes contact with the listeners' world while exalting Christ and confronting them with the need for action. (*Preaching for God's Glory*)
- Why teach through books of the Bible instead of interesting topics? I mean, won't we be able to draw a bigger crowd if we teach interesting topics? John Piper, when asked that question in an interview, said, "Well, I don't have any categories in my brain for relating to people who don't think it's interesting when God talks." We teach through books of the Bible simply because the Bible, and only the Bible is the Word of God. And we believe what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and *profitable* for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Profitable for truth, for exposing error, for correcting wrong behavior and for training good behavior. But even more, Paul said, that we may *be* complete men and women of God and that we may be equipped for every good work! That's a lot of good works. Good works in the home, good works in the church, good works in the place of business, good works in the community. So, it must beg the question: Why don't we see much expository preaching in churches anymore? Alistair Begg said, "The absence of expository preaching is directly related to an erosion of confidence in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture." If we lose confidence in the Bible, then we replace a period in the Bible with a comma. One example are churches that have rejected the clear truth from the Bible that God created two genders, male and female, and God ordained marriage as between one man and one woman. Period.
- We are committed to expository preaching as the norm at Antioch. It doesn't mean we can never share a sermon that is more topical, like this one, but probably 45 weeks of the year, we are working our way through a book in the Bible, verse by verse. Why is that helpful? Because you are getting the milk and the meat of Scripture. Try this experiment if you will, and your kids will LOVE it. Go for a

month just eating doughnuts for every meal. Or ice cream if you're not a doughnut family. All the kids said... Yeah! Sounds like fun! But it would make you sick. And weak. Topical preaching runs heavily toward milk and cookies. We need the meat and the vegetables that the Bible offers in every book to be spiritually healthy. Working through a book also gives us an understanding of the context from which each verse comes, the reason the author wrote the book, his intended audience, and how it fits into the whole of Scripture. Can you imagine a Chemistry professor teaching a textbook on chemistry by picking out parts of sentences at random and using them for his lectures, with no context, no understanding of how one thing relates to the other? Working through a book also forces us to deal with the difficult issues. You can't preach through James without talking about prejudice. Or, about the rich exploiting the poor. Or, how we can use our tongues to destroy other people. Sometimes the Bible confronts us and sometimes it upsets us. Tim Keller said this: "Only if your God can say things that upset you will you know you have a real God and not just a creation of your imagination. So an authoritative Bible (the point of contradiction) is not the enemy of a personal love relationship with God (the point of contact). It is the precondition."

- Paul spent three years in Ephesus, preaching and teaching. Remember when Paul met with the Ephesian elders a few years later, as he was on his way to Jerusalem? He said, "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:26-27) I believe the whole counsel of God can best be declared through expository preaching. Tim Keller said it this way: "Expository preaching should provide the main diet of preaching for a Christian community. . . . [It] is the best method for displaying and conveying your conviction that the whole Bible is true. This approach testifies that you believe every part of the Bible to be God's Word, not just particular themes and not just the parts you feel comfortable agreeing with." One of the constant themes of Scripture is the missionary heart of God, and the call on every believer to make disciples. That leads to a third value of this church, which we will address, Lord willing, next Sunday!
- Prayer
- Greet One Another