

Foundational Beliefs: The Church Matthew 16:13-20

Introduction:

When we think of defining what is church we often think that the church is a building like many of these. An old country church, a new modern church or somewhere in between. We think of church as a certain location and I would add a certain brand, Methodist, Catholic, Baptist etc.

But what I believe we are about to see from the scriptures that is a foundational truth is that the church is this - people, and God alive and present in people.

Reading Matthew 16:13-20

The Church has a sacred calling: v.18

“Upon this rock I will build my church..”

Remember the background of the scene. Jesus and his disciples are in a region that is more like the culture of Rome with a variety of religious, spiritual influences of which people live. Jesus asked the disciples what people in general were saying about him. The answers varied, some said perhaps Jesus was a prophet from the past like Jeremiah, Elijah or more recently John the Baptist who had been murdered. Out of all the options and choices, (v.16) the disciple Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, meaning the one and only special deliverer God was sending to rescue God's people.

Jesus told his disciples that the only way Peter could know the identity of Jesus was because God had revealed it to Peter. And then in verse 18 Jesus said, based on the confession of Peter, Jesus would build something and that something is the church. What is

real important here is to know what the word church means. **The word church means the “called out ones.”** The meaning is very similar to the word used when in the Old Testament we hear of God calling his people out of slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promise Land. The church is the called out people of God.

We often hear the expression today of being “called out” as a negative experience, being judged in front of others. Sports players called each other out for bad play. Politicians call other politicians out for bad policy. In this case, being called out is a good thing - it means we’re a part of the church. Jesus said I am building my church with people who see Jesus as God’s only Son. They have answered God’s call to come to him and leave the wrongful ways of the world behind and alone.

- The church is not built on nice people, but we should be nice.
- The church is not built on generous people, but we should be generous.
- The church is not built on intelligent people even though wisdom is invaluable and you don’t have to check your brains at the front door of the church.
- The church is not even built on people who agree about everything, although shared beliefs are important and helps morale and harmony.

The church is built on people demonstrating changed lives because as God calls out to us we obey his truth. Years later Peter himself would write a letter to Christians and say to them, **“Rid yourselves of all malice, and all guile, insincerity envy and all slander....like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood... (1 Peter 2:1, 4)**

Peter teaches how we know whether we are living like those who have been called out.

1. We strive to rid our lives of qualities like malice, envy and so

on.

2. We live for God to serve him “Priesthood” that’s every one.

The church is built on those who have answered the call to follow Jesus as God’s son and strive for obedience to him.

(Francis Chan clip)

God calls the church into being to be faithfully obedient.

I was reading an article by pastor James McDonald. He said that churches that use media like we do need to be real careful that we don’t focus on just using a scene from a movie that is powerful or something that is entertaining. He said, we need to be using video pieces from the lives of our own people. Video tape a members story how God helped them to surrender their life to him, overcome some significant obstacle but tap into your own people.

His point is well taken because he is saying, use the very people you go to church with every week because so they can share how they are responding to God calling out to them in this life. Maybe we’ll try that. Maybe you could never stand in front of people and talk but you would sit down with one person and allow them to record your story of how God has called out to you and you followed. (**James McDonald, church leaders.com, 5/20/2011**)

The Church has a creative character: v.19 (Acts 2:14-21)

“I will give you the keys to the kingdom, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven....”

Jesus responded to Peter’s confession by saying that he would give to his disciples **“the keys to the kingdom and whatever you bound on earth will bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be released in heaven.”** This is one of those

passages that generates a lot of discussion and differences in opinion because we don't find other statements like this. The closest scripture this is found in John 20:23 where Jesus said "If you forgive the sins of any they'll be forgiven if you retain them they'll be retained"

I think this could be a passage about the creative nature the church is to have. Jesus is giving the church some latitude to face the challenge of living as his followers in this world with creativity and flexibility.

Just weeks after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter would preach his first sermon as began to lead the church. In his very first sermon Peter will quote scripture from the prophet Joel that would be a sign that God's power was at work in the world. That prophecy said when God gets to moving:

- Old men will dream dreams
- Young men will have vision
- The spirit will fill slave and free

God work creatively giving old men dreams. When your old your time on earth is winding down but with God all things are possible. Young men would have visions, in biblical times young men weren't considered wise, but with God all things are possible. The spirit would fill people whether they were slave or free from the Penthouse to the out-house. The church will be made up of a variety of people able to do a variety of things in a variety of ways.

God is a creative God and always has been. I was reading on the internet that now they have discovered planets that are moving in parts of outer space and these planets are not connected to any solar system They are being called rogue planets and this is a relatively new finding to scientist. Its just one more example how creative God is as he designed the universe.

God's a creative God. Why wouldn't God want the church to have creativity. He planned for many types of people and many types of ideas to be in the people he called to be his church. We can have creativity in how we live as a church.

- The church is to have a creative character but that character has to pass the key test - does it help others come to answer God's call on their lives.
- Does the creative nature of the church help us rid ourselves like 1 Peter described the malice the envy etc.
- Does the creative ways of being God's people the church and using this building and grounds to help people to grow in Christ as his followers?
- Creativity just to be creative isn't the point. Jesus said I am giving you the keys to the kingdom for a purpose so you can bind and loosen what needs bound and set freed.

We can have creativity to reach out and share the gospel any way we want as long as it passes the test to call people to following Christ.

Illustration: There is a Christian organization/ministry called Outreach.com. They specialize in marketing resources for churches to do evangelism ministries. A while back they offered a free download of 25 outreach ideas that included the following ministries for cancer victims, sponsoring a community 5k run, to scrap-booking. I am not saying any of those ideas will work here but some are creative and would only work in other places and city because those churches were creative.

June 16 we are going to have another congregational meeting to update and share what our Charting the Course team has been working on so far. We are now at the point where we are

brainstorming ministries and events we would like to see our church consider and begin to do over the next 1-5 years.

We want to share what we have tried to prayerfully consider and also gather from the church as a whole. It's our way of tapping into the truth that church is to be a creative force in our community.

July 24th is a day we are planning a cookout after worship and having the southern gospel group the Fincher's to come and sing. We can make that as creative of an event as we want. We could decorate the front yard in advance to promote people to attend. We can add activities for kids and adult. With all the break-ins going on around town maybe we ought to have a neighborhood watch meeting here later that day. But most of all we want to use that as a time through whatever people experience that they hear God's call to their hearts and lives.

The Church has a compelling purpose: v.18
"The gates of Hell will not prevail against it."

Last of Jesus teaches that the church has a compelling purpose. Jesus said to his disciples upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Jesus said that the influences of Hell cannot stop the church from breaking into the domain of evil. Lets make sure we correctly get this picture that Jesus described.

It is not for the church to be passive and wait just for Jesus to return. It is not for the church wait for people to come and worship with us and find God. It is not for the church to let schools and clubs and sports instill the core values that make life significant. I get as annoyed as anyone how the culture has changed to where people find more significance spending Sunday mornings at malls, lakes, golf courses and ball diamonds however, some it can be

because the church lost its creative edge. We have let other social groups be more creative and compelling than God's people. We let other groups be more challenging more innovative. If Jesus heard how some coaches challenge and demand from their players and parents - he call those coaches into ministry - because the church has a compelling mission.

When Jesus said that gates of hell cannot stop the church it means the church is suppose to be on the offensive challenging the culture about what is good and true, that there is a hell shun and a heaven to gain. The church is suppose to be a game changer transforming what is wrong to leading people to what is right. The church is to be an instigator of goodness that points to Jesus Christ.

The problem is sometimes we go no farther than being the called ones than coming here. We answer the call to come to worship to fellowship some to study the bible but some; but then we stop.

He said the gates of Hell or Hades could not stop. Hell or Hades was known as the underworld the place of death. So Jesus said the church needs to offer true life to a world that settles for dead ends.

Dead ends because they make the minor things in life major and major things in life minor.

Conclusion: We traded in our van this past week for a late model used care with about a 100,000 less miles than our van. That evening when Daniel got in from work he asked if he could take the car to play tennis in Dyersburg. I said sure and we gave him the keys and off he went. Now in the back of my mind I'll admit I thought man it's the first night I know he'll be careful but I just hope if he stops at sonic after tennis he won't like scratch the side mirrors when he pulls up to order. But as parents you love your kids you want to share with them so we gave him the keys.

Our Heavenly father loves us. Jesus loves us. In the Bible the church is describe like the bride of Christ and through his love has called us out so he could toss us the keys to drive this ministry creatively and compellingly to share Jesus Christ.