



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 2/Issue 5

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

Welcome to Volume 2 of the FBCN Newsletter or the “current new normal” editions.

This week’s reading will be Psalm 81 (ESV), Titled, Oh, That My People Would Listen to Me.

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.

81 Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob!

² Raise a song; sound the

tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. ³ Blow the trumpet at the new

moon, at the full moon, on our feast day.⁴ For it is a statute for Israel,

a rule of the God of Jacob.⁵ He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a

language I had not known: ⁶ “I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket.”⁷ In

distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah*

⁸ Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me!⁹ There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god.¹⁰ I am the LORD your

God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.¹¹ “But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.¹³ Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!¹⁴ I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes.¹⁵ Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever.¹⁶ But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

At the beginning of this weeks reading, following the title, we have the word “Gittith.” I found that the definition found in, “The Hawkers Poor Mans Concordance and Dictionary,” gives the most concise definitions of this word.

This word is found in Scripture only at the head, or title page, of several Psalms; namely, Psa 8:1-9, Psa 81:1-16 and Psa 84:1-12. Various have been the opinions of the learned concerning it, and for the most part different. Some contend, that it means the wine-presses. Others will insist, that it refers to some musical instruments used in the temple-service. Some derive it from

the word Gath; and, therefore, conclude it refers to that city. And another class suppose it means Goliah, the Gittite. But be it what it may, certain it is, that the knowledge of it in the present hour cannot be very important, as God the Holy Ghost hath not thought it essential to be known by the church. The Psalms which bear this name in the title, are not less blessed for our ignorance on this point; though if it be, as it is possible it may have, a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, it would be gratifying to know it.

Our guest speaker this week will be Kurt Pazdra.

Join us for a virtual prayer meeting on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

One tap mobile

+13126266799

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

"The church today should not primarily fear that we lose our earthly freedoms, but rather that we lose touch with the eternal mission of redemption!"

Pastor Josh Pegram

Psalm 118:6 *The Lord is on my side: I will not fear: what can man do unto me?*

I came upon this quote this week and it challenged me to dig deeper into how it affects me as a Christian and us as a church body. We are currently witnessing a "cultural revolution" taking place in our streets and homes. I ponder if this is the beginning of an ideological and political crisis in our country, and if it is a call to return to our *radical roots*, confessing that our God condemns all religious beliefs that reject Christ's sacrifice for our guilt.

My intent is to ask/challenge that you take an assessment of your core beliefs. Your "core beliefs" are ideals or philosophies that you hold very strongly and very deeply. These ideals are usually developed in childhood or early in adult life. Core beliefs aren't always negative. But given our current global situation you might believe that "the world is a bad place." This will lead to a general mistrust and a questioning of everything around you. Your core beliefs are called 'core' because they're your deeply held ideas and they're at the very center of your belief system. Core beliefs give rise to rules, demands or assumptions, which in turn produce automatic thoughts (thoughts that just pop into your head when you're confronted with a situation). As a Christian our automatic thoughts/responses should turn to our faith life. If we have an active, vibrant faith life, one centered around the Bible, God, Jesus, Salvation, and the Holy Spirit then we will not become distracted by the global situation or get caught up in the negative rhetoric being advocated.

"A driver is a king on a vinyl bucket-seat throne, changing direction with the turn of a wheel, changing the climate with the flick of the button, changing the music with the switch of a dial"

- Andrew H. Malcolm

There should be an understanding of how core values should be formed. I want to focus on two words that were mentioned previously they are radical and roots. First the word "roots." I am going to look at it as it relates to our current situation in America. We are living in what is termed American civil or civic religion defined as the implicit religious values of a nation, as expressed through public rituals, symbols (such as the national flag), and ceremonies on sacred days and at sacred places (such as monuments, battlefields, or national cemeteries). It is distinct from churches, although church officials and ceremonies are sometimes incorporated into the practice of civil religion. It is also a sociological theory that a nonsectarian quasi-religious faith exists within the United States with sacred symbols drawn from national history. What we are seeing as a by product of our current social unrest is what is termed as iconoclasm. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines this as *strong opposition to generally accepted beliefs and traditions*. This can be seen across our country by the desecration of statues and memorials. Throughout history and across cultures, regime change almost always begins and ends with the destruction and removal of symbols. Iconoclasm is one of the most powerful strategies for cultural revolution. We are currently witnessing a cultural revolution.

American civil religion teaches us to behave civilly, all of us believers, and to respect all religious beliefs. But, is Christianity a civil religion? Are Christians taught by God's Word to respect all religious beliefs?

Now that we understand our roots let's look at the second word "*radical*." Using the definition from Dictionary.com, it is "*a person who holds or follows strong convictions or extreme principles; extremist*." From the definition provided we can interpret both a positive and a negative characterization. On the positive we have the following of strong convictions. On the negative we see the words extreme or extremist. In society these words have the connotation of evil but they can actually mean passionate. I am taking the positive viewpoint and I will be defining radical as "*one expressing strict adherence to a worldview that is at extreme odds with the cultural norm*."

"Radical. Epic. Revolutionary. Transformative. Impactful. Life-Changing. Ultimate. Extreme. Awesome. Emergent. Alternative Innovative. On the Edge. The Next Big Thing. Explosive Breakthrough. You can probably add to the list of modifiers that have become, ironically, part of the ordinary conversations in society and in today's church. Most of us have heard expressions like these so often that they've become background noise. We tune them out, unconsciously doubting what is offered because it has become so predictably common. "

Michael Horton, *Ordinary*, Page 11

Are you a radical Christian? Or are you a relaxed Christian? If "normal" is in the middle, then a "radical" would be a person at either end of the spectrum. Jesus—was Himself a radical. He preached a message of love, forgiveness, and mercy that was at direct odds with the accepted views of the day.

He refused to fight back when attacked, 1 Peter 2:23 *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

To allow Peter to defend Him with violence Matthew 26:51-52 ⁵¹ *And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.* ⁵² *Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword."*

The condemnation the woman caught in adultery John 8:4-11 ⁴ *they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.* ⁵ *Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"* ⁶ *This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.* ⁷ *And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."* ⁸ *And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.* ⁹ *But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.* ¹⁰ *Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"* ¹¹ *She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."*

Those were all radical acts for that time and culture. One reason some people turned away from Christ was that His requirement of giving up everything for His own sake was simply too radical Luke 18:22-23 ²² *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* ²³ *But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.*

Many people have lost their faith in Christ because they simply lacked the courage to stand up for what they believed. Radicals, if they really are genuinely radical, have a common

thread – they actually believe their commitments.

This leads to both inspiration for some and isolation for others, but almost always leads to action of some kind.

Look at what Jesus proposed. There was one major theme of Jesus' ministry that went beyond anything any other rabbi taught and was entirely unique to Him. Not only was it radical, it also was central to His lifestyle, His teaching about the Kingdom of God, and His mission as the Messiah. It is the following: Matthew 5:43-45, ⁴³ *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'* ⁴⁴ *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵ *so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*

This is probably the most difficult command Jesus ever gave, and even for us today it might seem impossible. But this one teaching guides our attitudes toward others, toward those that don't think the same way we do, that disagree violently or calmly, that have drawn conclusions other than ours, or have a model of religion or following God that is uncomfortable to us or completely opposite of our own conclusions.

This is a call for radical love, for radical commitment, all because this is the way God is, according to Matthew 5. And to feel comfortable about using God as your model as seen in the life and ministry of Jesus, is about as radical and revolutionary as anything the world has seen today.

How do you see Jesus? Do you think you could be radical like Him?

The decision to follow Christ is itself a call to radical living. Luke 9:23-25 ²³ *And*

he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ *For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.* ²⁵ *For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"*

That command is at extreme odds with our flesh's desire to please itself as we see in Romans 7:21-23 ²¹ *"So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.* ²² *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,* ²³ *but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."*

Being a radical Christian challenges worldly wisdom, which preaches self-fulfillment as our highest aim 1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵ *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶ *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.* ¹⁷ *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

And we see in Matthew 10:37-38 ³⁷ *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* ³⁸ *And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*

The lifestyle changes that follow such a commitment are considered radical by those who fall within the world's definition of "normal." Those who claim to know Christ yet refuse this radical lifestyle are living a material lifestyle, 1 Corinthians 3:3 ³ *for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?* Jesus calls such professing

Christians “lukewarm” and says He will spit them out of His mouth Revelation 3:16 ¹⁶ *So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.*

Radical Christians understand Paul’s desire in Philippians 3:10 ¹⁰ *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*

A radical Christian is one who has “died to the flesh” Romans 8:13 ¹³ *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

The apostles were radical Christians—they “turned the world upside down” Acts 17:6, ⁶ *And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.*

They did it through self-sacrifice and love Acts 17:6 ⁶ *And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.*

Paul learned to boast about his weakness 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 ⁹ *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

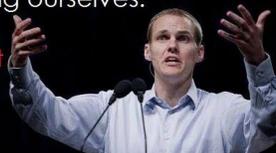
Because following Jesus is in direct conflict with the “norm,” Philippians

1:21 ²¹ *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain, could be considered a radical way of life.*

Radical commitment to Christ and His love for us, His life, His promises, His empowerment, His forgiveness, all have positive results. This positive radicalism builds churches, increases personal self-esteem, increases caring for others and even assists in one’s success. The call to be a radical disciple will challenge our addiction to comfort and increase our vision beyond ourselves.

We are settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.

-David Platt





PRAYER LIST

✓ Continuing Prayers for loss: All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19.

✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs: Rita McManus, Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs: The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries: BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy, Vitel

✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs: Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman, George Bizadellis

✓ Continuing Prayers for: The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect. Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic especially Mylin and Errol Lardizabal and Liza Mitchell.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family, we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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