

# OUR CORE VALUES

## Fellowship Bible Church - Longview, Texas

updated 10/27/2017

### WORSHIP in the LOVE of CHRIST

- **WE BELIEVE IN BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS WITH RELEVANT FORMS**

As a Church, we hold fast to the timeless truths that God has delivered to us in His Word. The Word of God is our standard of faith and practice.

At the same time, we have found that some of the church traditions that have been handed down to us over the years are not mandated by the Word of God. For instance, the Bible does not instruct us on how many services to hold each week, or that we should be seated on pews, or that we should sing only out of a hymnbook. We, therefore, assume that when the Bible does not speak clearly to an issue, that the Lord has given us the freedom to apply His timeless truth to our contemporary culture in a way that is relevant and meaningful.

This Church does not seek to be different for the sake of being different, but rather to more effectively meet the people needs of today's culture.

### GROW in the CHARACTER of CHRIST

- **WE BELIEVE IN THE FREEDOM TO APPLY THE TRUTH**

We believe that people develop spiritually when they assume personal responsibility for their spiritual life. We choose to proclaim the Word of God in its fullness from our pulpit, but we encourage the individual to do the work of applying it to their own lives.

We preach the principles in the Word of God which transcend temporary fashion trends and musical artists. The individual is then challenged to respond not to the preacher's conscience but to the Word of God so that he or she can make spiritual decisions based on their own developing personal convictions.

- **WE BELIEVE IN MAJORING ON THE MAJORS**

We believe unity is important. It was the heart cry of our Savior in John 17:21, "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." In short, Jesus prayed that we all might be one so that the world would be impacted by that witness and come to believe in Jesus.

Unfortunately, the Church has always been better at drawing lines in the dirt and dividing over issues rather than pulling together. We believe that some doctrinal issues are non-negotiable. There is clear teaching in the Word of God about the Deity of Christ, salvation, heaven, hell and many other issues.

On the other hand, the Scripture doesn't speak quite as directly about some issues such as the proper form of church government or whether church membership is biblical. We recognize that many godly folks through the ages have had differing convictions on these issues. FBC has clear a doctrinal statement and proclaims a clear set of biblical convictions, but in light of the diversity of biblical convictions in the Body of

Christ, the Church also feels comfortable in working with and accommodating folks who have differing thoughts on the less critical doctrinal issues.

As a church, we make a concerted attempt at fulfilling Christ's prayer for us in John 17 by serving the Lord with all our genuine brothers and sisters in Christ, sometimes in total agreement and at other times agreeing on the essentials while lovingly holding different lesser convictions.

- **WE BELIEVE IN MOTIVATION BY GRACE NOT GUILT**

The Apostle Paul testifies to having been motivated to serve God by the love that Christ had for him (2 Corinthians 5:14). Too often churches use guilt to motivate and in the process, alienate and spiritually harass their congregations. We try to focus on the Grace of God and the great challenge to which it calls us. There is room at FBC for a person to fall and stumble in their spiritual pilgrimage and yet be loved and restored. There is freedom to miss a service or two and not expect a visitation committee to be at your front door. On the other hand, our commitment to each other in Christian love requires us to gently and lovingly confront each other about sin if we are in need.

- **WE BELIEVE IN FULL FORGIVENESS**

FBC is a church that recognizes that we are all sinners saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We recognize God's supernatural ability to take a sinner and turn him or her into a dazzling trophy of His mercy and grace. We know of no biblical limits that would keep anyone from serving in his/her fullest capacity in the Kingdom of God. We believe that God can transform the repentant alcoholic, tax cheat, liar, homosexual, the one who has wrongfully divorced, the gossip, and murderer into a useful servant in His kingdom. FBC understands the Bible to teach that even these sins do not necessarily permanently disqualify a man from serving in the office of Deacon or Elder. Such is the grace of God. FBC is a church that is hard on sin, but loving, forgiving, and encouraging to the sinner. Therefore, we extend our invitation to anyone who desires to grow in Christ, regardless of their past sin, to join us.

## CONNECT to the BODY of CHRIST

- **WE BELIEVE CHILDREN ARE IMPORTANT**

We recognize that the Scripture clearly instructs believing parents to raise up godly children. FBC is committed to assisting in that process. A lot of our time, money and people resources is invested in training and discipling our children and teens. In addition, there is often available training opportunities for parents.

Furthermore, it seems that the most vulnerable part of our society, the group that needs the most in terms of moral training seems to be the children and teens of our community who are often denied such training in their schools, civic institutions and evens their homes. We, therefore, feel a special sense of responsibility toward ministry to the young in our community.

- **WE BELIEVE IN SHARED LEADERSHIP**

We believe that God has given the responsibility and authority over a local church to a team of Elders who are to shepherd, protect, feed and lead the church. The pastor is one Elder among equals. We believe that this principle of shared leadership promotes humility and accountability and it results in wiser, richer decisions which makes for a healthier church. The value of shared leadership is of such value that we also choose to practice it in other leadership contexts within the church.

- **WE BELIEVE IN A LARGE GROUP AND SMALL GROUPS**

The first century church was very large and yet very small at the same time. There were many who believed but few meeting places that could accommodate such a large group. Therefore, the typical church meeting took place in a home.

We are convinced that small group ministries provide the most effective means of cultivating genuine biblical living, promoting meaningful relationships, and providing a support network for the believer.

At FBC we carry on this small group tradition believing that the Church can grow large and still remain effective as long as our folks are involved in small groups.

- **WE BELIEVE THE FAMILY IS OUR FOUNDATION**

Certainly, the Church ought to be a proponent of strong families. However, it seems that quite often the Church is one of the greatest perpetrators in the weakening of the family. Consider the fictitious Jerusalem Bible Church who expects their congregation to be at church on Sunday morning and evening, then expects mom at church on Monday for the Ladies Missionary Group, and dad for committee meeting on Tuesday; the family for prayer meeting on Wednesday, mom and dad for visitation on Thursday; teens for youth group on Friday; and dad for the men's fellowship on Saturday.

FBC wants to build healthy families. Consequently, we have one worship service a week which folks are expected to support. We try to be sensitive to families when we plan our schedules. We give folks the freedom to not participate if it means neglecting their families. We give folks the freedom to be flexible with our programs so that if someone wishes to have their child in the worship service with them on Sunday instead of Learning Center, they have the freedom to do it. We are also committed to training our folks as husbands, wives, and parents.

- **WE BELIEVE IN PEOPLE OVER PROGRAMS**

Certainly, every group of people needs to be organized. Sometimes, we fall into the trap of allowing an organization become more important than the people it was intended to organize. At FBC, we work hard at keeping our ministry to people as a priority. If we have a program that does not seem to be meeting people needs, we let it die a merciful death. If personal conflicts or concerns should arise in the course of ministry, they are handled with personal concern and attention rather than through policy dictates. If a person is struggling because they have inadvertently overcommitted themselves in the ministry of this church, they are given the freedom and encouragement to pull back from ministry. Christ died for people rather than programs. We want to honor this principle in our ministry.

## GO on the MISSION of CHRIST

- **WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY PERSON IS A MINISTER**

God gave gifted men and women to the Church in order to equip others for ministry (Eph. 4:11-16). We believe that it is critical that every individual be trained and then be involved in service to the Lord.

Trained people then need opportunities to serve. FBC is committed to involve people in ministry at every level. This church makes it a priority to provide opportunities for folks to stretch out and serve such as teaching children, administering programs, baptizing their own children or folks they may personally lead to Christ and more. Even many tasks that are commonly thought to be the private domain of a pastor or a select few will be shouldered by many others.

- **WE BELIEVE IN SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

Jesus gave us the example of the ideal leader when He took a towel and a basin, and washed the grimy feet of his followers and said *"If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* (John 13:14)

Therefore, the leadership model for FBC is servant leadership. As we lead we will seek the good of others before our own. We will serve others, sacrifice for others, endure suffering on behalf of others and if necessary stand aside for the sake of others. We will endeavor to do this not only at church, but in our communities and homes as well.

- **WE BELIEVE IN WINNING THE WORLD ONE FRIEND AT A TIME**

We believe evangelism is extremely important to the Lord and His plan for His Church. We understand that effective evangelism takes place when people who know and care about people share their faith with them in a personal way.

We believe FBC can best help that process to take place by maintaining a spiritually healthy church home in which our members can grow and develop spiritually, providing training for folks so that they can share their faith, and by occasionally making special outreach programs available to assist folks in their efforts to reach others.

We view our worship service as a time set aside to worship our Lord and edify and strengthen our members as opposed to evangelizing the lost. However, we do recognize that often a person who is spiritually hungry will come to a worship service as a first step towards moving closer to God. We are committed to making our services as friendly and sensitive to such a seeker.

- **WE BELIEVE IN IMPACTING THE COMMUNITY**

At FBC we believe that this Church and the people that make it up ought to voice our concerns about our country and community. Consequently, we strongly encourage our folks to get involved in the community and even the political arena in order to bring a moral/ethical perspective to these arenas; a perspective that only a believer in Christ and His Word can bring. As a church, we are careful never to endorse a political candidate, but the leadership does feel free to speak clearly about issues of national and local importance which enter into the moral realm. You will observe folks from FBC campaigning for rights for the unborn or standing against the growth of pornography in this community.

- **WE BELIEVE IN HONORING MEN AND WOMEN**

The Scripture makes it clear that women and men are equal in value to God (Gen. 1:27); both are coheirs of salvation (Gal. 3:28) and both are gifted with the same kinds of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4-6). Yet, we also recognize that women fulfill a different role in God's organizational structure. Christ chose 12 male apostles and Paul required the Elders of the church to be male (1 Tim. 3:1-2). It is comforting to know that a similar organizational structure exists between the Father and the Son, "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." (1 Cor 11:3)

This being the case, we want to celebrate the value and giftedness of women by liberating them to minister, while respecting the organizational structure that has been prescribed for the church. We believe in being a church where a woman has the fullest opportunity to serve and yet a church where a man is encouraged to fulfill his role as a leader both in the home and at church. (For a further discussion see the "Women In Ministry" Position Paper on file at the church office.)