



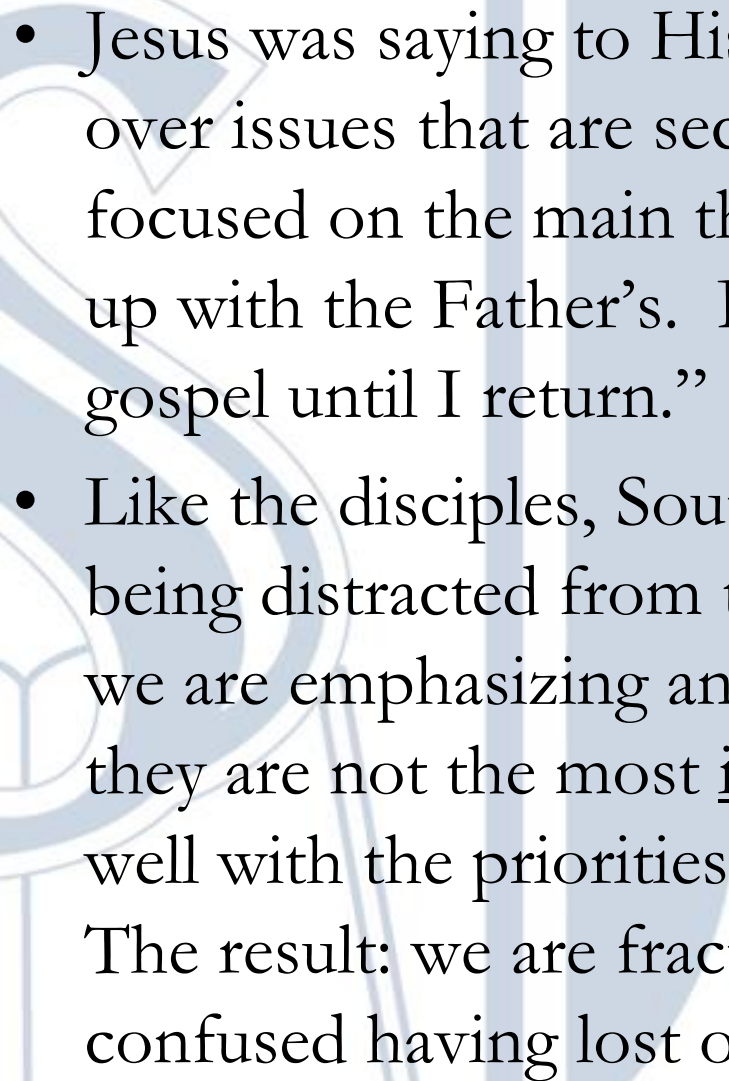
“Axioms for a Great Commission Resurgence”

Acts 1:4-8

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- Jesus was saying to His followers, “do not get distracted over issues that are secondary and non-essential. Stay focused on the main thing. Make sure your priorities line up with the Father’s. Be my witnesses and advance the gospel until I return.”
 - Like the disciples, Southern Baptists today run the risk of being distracted from the main thing. Many of the issues we are emphasizing and debating are interesting things, but they are not the most important things. They don’t line up well with the priorities we find revealed in Holy Scripture. The result: we are fractured and factionalizing. We are confused having lost our spiritual compass.

- The Great Commission has been defined for us in Matthew 28:18-20. These principles or axioms describe what the implementation of a Great Commission Resurgence for Southern Baptist might look like.
- It is hard to imagine the evil one leading us to intensify our involvement with what the blogging demon Wormwood calls that “cursed Commission!” I do think all the demons of hell would do all that they can to distract us from it.

I. We must commit ourselves to the total and absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of our lives. (Col. 3:16-17, 23-24)

- Jesus Christ must be our passion and priority. We must aspire to both know Him and love Him more fully.
- Southern Baptists need to become more than ever “a Jesus intoxicated people,” returning to our first love. (Rev. 2:4-5). We must love Him, worship Him, adore Him, exult in Him, share Him and exemplify Him.
- When the world thinks of us, they should think first, “those are the folks in love with Jesus. They are the people obsessed with Jesus. There is a people that talk and act and serve and love like Jesus. Southern Baptists are Jesus people!”

II. We must be gospel centered in all our endeavors for the glory of God. (Rom. 1:16)

- The Lordship of Jesus Christ and His gospel is what it is all about. It is why we exist as the people of God.
- Being “gospel centered” means we are “grace centered.”
- Being gospel centered means we proclaim His victory over death, hell, the grave, and sin by His substitutionary atonement and glorious resurrection. We must be gospel centered for our justification, our sanctification and our glorification.

II. We must be gospel centered in all our endeavors for the glory of God. (Rom. 1:16)

- Pursuing in all things the “glory of God” means we will be theocentric and not anthropocentric in our worship and work.
- A radically gospel-centered life will ensure that the bloody cross of a crucified King is the offense to non-believers not our styles, traditions, legalisms, moralisms, preferences and sourpuss attitudes!
- A radically gospel-centered life will promote a grace-filled salvation from beginning to end putting on display the beauty of the gospel in all of life’s aspects.
- Too many of our pulpits have jettisoned the proclamation of the gospel. Too many of our people have lost the meaning and therefore the wonder of the gospel. No gospel, no Great Commission Resurgence.

III. We must take our stand on the firm foundation of the inerrant and infallible Word of God affirming it's sufficiency in all matters.

(Matt 5:17-18; John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

- The “war for the Bible” is not over and it will never end until Jesus returns.
- “The question of biblical inspiration is ultimately a question of Christological identity.” – Russ Bush

IV. We must devote ourselves to a radical pursuit of the Great Commission in the context of obeying the Great Commandments.

(Matt. 28:16-20; 22:37-40)

- A devoted follower of Jesus Christ gets excited about 1) reaching the nations for Christ, 2) reaching our nation, the United States of America, for Christ and 3) doing so in a manner that is biblically-theologically sound and driven. Why? Because all three are in the DNA of the Great Commission.
- However, a real Great Commission Resurgence will not only possess Great Commission DNA, it will also be alive with Great Commandment DNA too.

V. We must affirm the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* as a healthy and sufficient guide for building a theological consensus for partnership in the gospel, refusing to be sidetracked by theological agendas that distract us from our Lord's Commission. (1 Tim. 6:3-4)

- What do we as Southern Baptists agree on doctrinally and theologically? The answer, praise God, is a lot.

What do we as Southern Baptists agree on doctrinally and theologically?

- We affirm the inerrancy, infallibility, authority and sufficiency of the Bible.
- We affirm the Triune God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent.
- We affirm God as Creator and reject naturalistic evolution as nonsense.
- We affirm both the dignity and depravity of man.
- We affirm the full deity, perfect humanity and sinlessness of Jesus the Son of God.

What do we as Southern Baptists agree on doctrinally and theologically?

- We affirm the penal substitutionary nature of the atonement as foundational for understanding the cross work of our Savior.
- We affirm the good news of the gospel as the exclusive and only means whereby any person is reconciled to God.
- We affirm the biblical nature of a regenerate church witnessed in believer's baptism by immersion.
- We affirm salvation by grace alone thru faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone.

What do we as Southern Baptists agree on doctrinally and theologically?

- We affirm the reception of the Holy Spirit at the moment of regeneration/conversion and the blessing of spiritual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ.
- We affirm the literal, visible and historical return of Jesus Christ to this earth when He will manifest fully His kingdom.
- We affirm the reality of an eternal heaven and an eternal hell with Jesus as the only difference.

What do we as Southern Baptists agree on doctrinally and theologically?

- We affirm a “sanctity of life” ethic from conception to natural death.
- We affirm the sanctity of heterosexual marriage, the goodness of sex in marriage and the gift of children, lots of them.
- We affirm the complementary nature of male/female relationships rejoicing in the divine ordering of them for the home and the church; and the list could go on.

Now there are also some things we do not agree on doctrinally and theologically. For example:

- The exact nature of human depravity and transmission of the sin nature.
- The precise constitution of the human person.
- The issue of whether or not Christ could have sinned. (We all agree He didn't!)
- The *ordo salutis* (“order of salvation”).
- The number of elders and the precise nature of congregational governance.

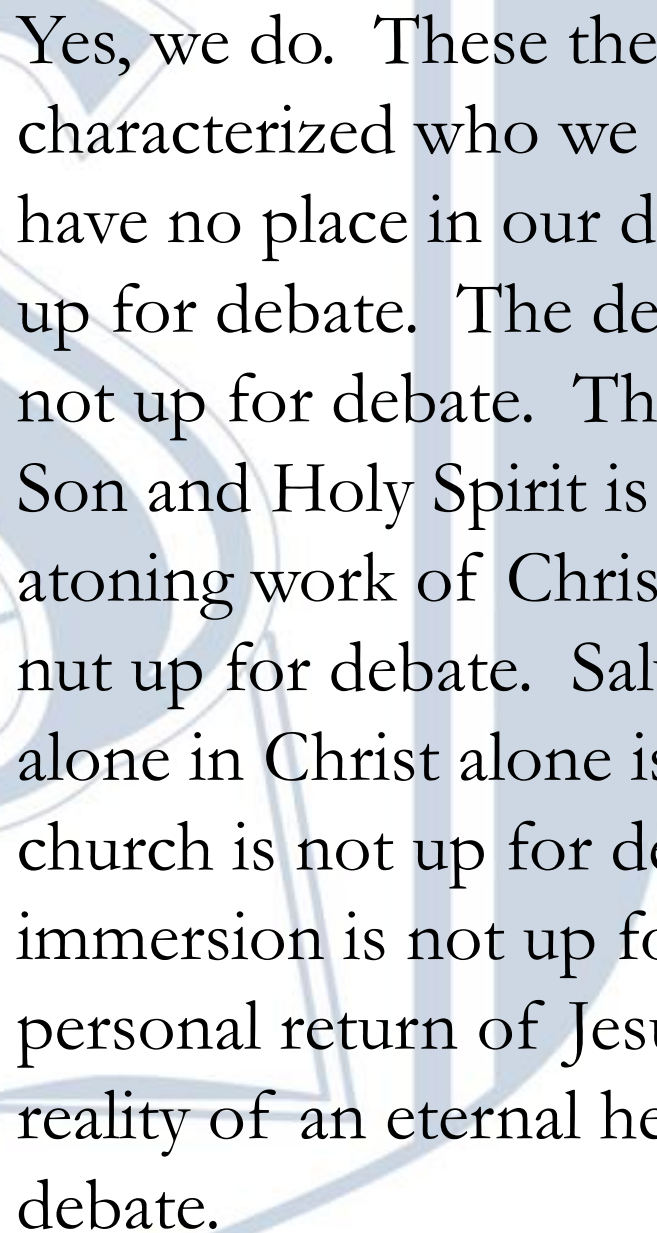
Now there are also some things we do not agree on doctrinally and theologically.

- The continuance of certain spiritual gifts and their nature.
- Does baptism require only right member (born again), right meaning (believer's) and right mode (immersion) or does it also require the right administrator (ever how that is defined).
- The time of the rapture (pre, mid, post, partial rapture or pre-wrath rapture).
- The nature of the millennium (pre, amill or post)
- And, saving the best for last in our current context, we are not in full agreement about Calvinism and how many points one should affirm or redefine and affirm!

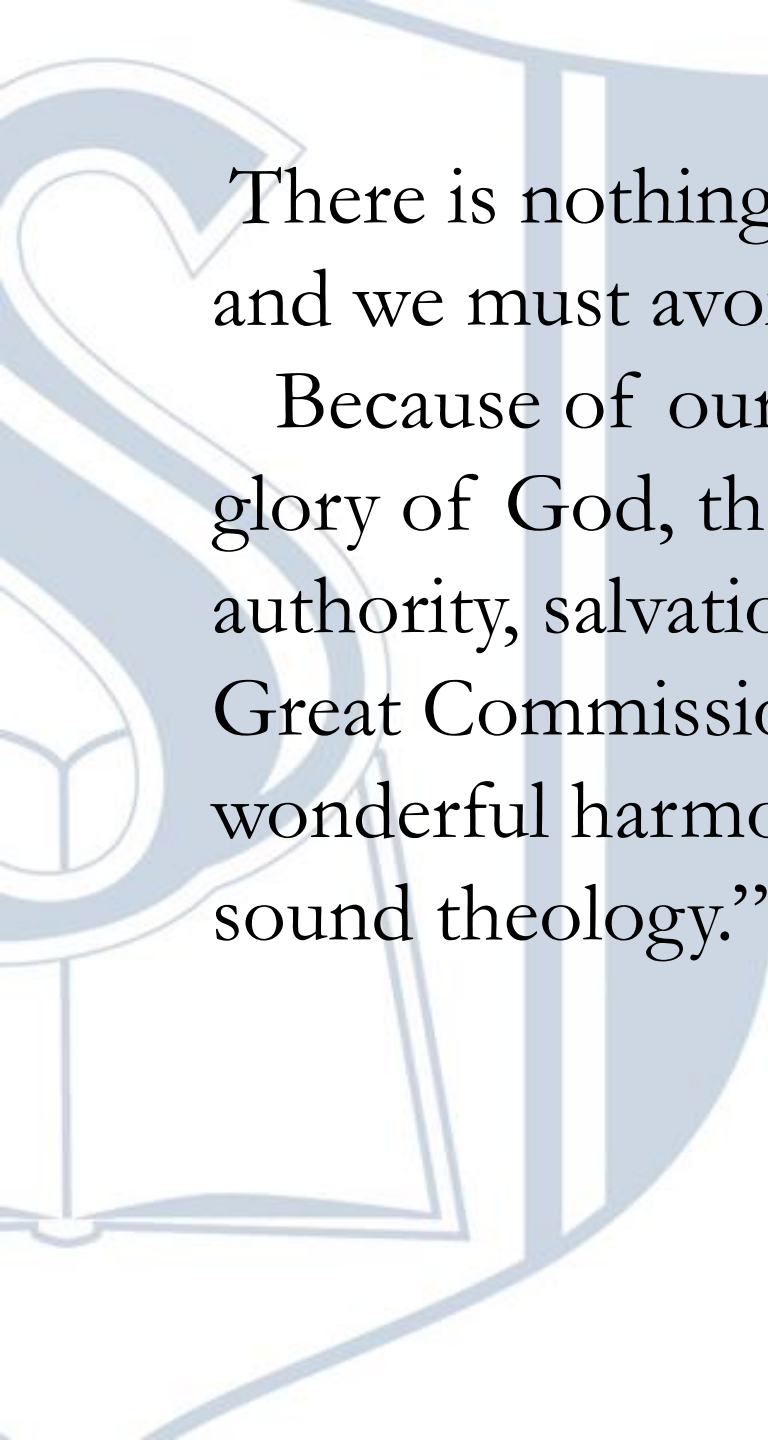
Theological Triage

1. First-order doctrines are those that are fundamental and essential to the Christian faith.
2. Second-order doctrines are those that are essential to church life and necessary for the ordering of the local church but that, in themselves, do not define the gospel.
3. Third-order doctrines are those that may be the ground for fruitful theological discussion and debate but that do not threaten the fellowship of the local congregation or the denomination.

“Our agreement on *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* is an asset, not a weakness. It is a plus and not a minus. If I were to pen my own confession it would not look exactly like the *BF&M 2000*. But then I do not want nor do I need people exactly like me in order to work together for the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the building of His church. Our confession is a solid foundation for a sound theology that avoids the pitfalls and quicksand of a straightjacket theology. Do we want or need a theology that rules out of bounds open theism, universalism and inclusivism, faulty perspectives on the atonement, gender-role confusion, works salvation, apostasy of true believers, infant baptism and non-congregational ecclesiology’s just to name a few?



Yes, we do. These theological errors have never characterized who we are as Southern Baptists and they have no place in our denomination today. Inerrancy is not up for debate. The deity of Jesus and His sinless life are not up for debate. The triune nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not up for debate. The perfect atoning work of Christ as a penal substitute for sinners is not up for debate. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is not up for debate. A regenerate church is not up for debate. Believers' baptism by immersion is not up for debate. The glorious historical and personal return of Jesus Christ is not up for debate. The reality of an eternal heaven and an eternal hell is not up for debate.



There is nothing soft about this kind of theology, and we must avoid a soft theology at all cost.

Because of our passionate commitments to the glory of God, the Lordship of Christ, biblical authority, salvation by grace through faith, and the Great Commission, we should be able to work in wonderful harmony with each other. We have a sound theology.”

VI. We must dedicate ourselves to a passionate pursuit of the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus across our nation and to all nations answering the call to go, disciple, baptize and teach all that the Lord commanded.

(Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:5; 15:20)

VII. We must covenant to build gospel saturated homes that see children as a gift from God and as our first and primary mission field.

(Deut. 6:1-9; Psalm 127; 128; Eph. 6:4)

- Southern Baptists have been seduced by the sirens of modernity in a very important place. We have been seduced in how we do family and how many we should have in the home.
- We have been seduced with respect to the gift of children.
- We have been seduced with respect to the importance of motherhood.
- We have been seduced with respect to the role of dad.

VII. We must covenant to build gospel saturated homes that see children as a gift from God and as our first and primary mission field.

(Deut. 6:1-9; Psalm 127; 128; Eph. 6:4)

- We have been seduced with respect to what a good home is and does. Let me clarify what a good home looks like:
 - It loves Jesus.
 - It honors God.
 - It teaches the Bible.
 - It casts a vision for spiritual greatness.
 - It has fun!
 - It let's go so that our children may soar for the glory of God!

VIII. We must recognize the need to rethink our Convention structure and identity so that we maximize our energy and resources for the fulfilling of the Great Commission. (1 Cor. 10:31)

- Too much of the Southern Baptist Convention is aiming at a culture that went out of existence years ago. Using mid-20th century methods and strategies, we cannot understand why they are not working in the 21st century.
- It is easier to move some things thru the Federal government than the Southern Baptist Convention. Overlap and duplication in our associations, state and national conventions is strangling us!
- I want to challenge us to do simple Convention. Let's streamline our structure, clarify our identity and maximize our resources.

Thoughts on the Future of the SBC:

1. Is there not a way to have annual meetings on the National and State levels that are attractive, inspiring and worth attending?
2. Is the name “Southern Baptist Convention” best for identifying who we are and want to be in the future?
3. Do we need all the boards and agencies we currently have or could there be some healthy and wise mergers?
4. Do we have a healthy structure and mechanism for planting churches that will thrive and survive past a few years?

Thoughts on the Future of the SBC:

5. Do we have a giving program that fairly and accurately reflects the gifts many Southern Baptist churches are making to the work of our denomination?
6. Are we distracted by doing many good things but not giving our full attention to the best things? Church planting in the United States, pioneer missions around the world and theological education that starts in the seminaries but finds its way to the local church is a 3-legged stool I believe most Southern Baptists would gladly occupy!

IX. We must see the necessity for pastors to be faithful Bible preachers who teach us both the content of the Scriptures and the theology embedded in the Scriptures. (2 Tim. 4:1-5)

- We need a new battalion of well trained expositors who preach the whole Bible book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, phrase by phrase and word by word.
- “One of the most depressing spectacles in the church today is her lack of power...At the heart of this problem is an impotent pulpit.” – Walt Kaiser
- “The first mark of a healthy church is expository preaching. It is not only the first mark; it is far and away the most important of them all, because if you get this one right, all of the others should follow” - Mark Dever

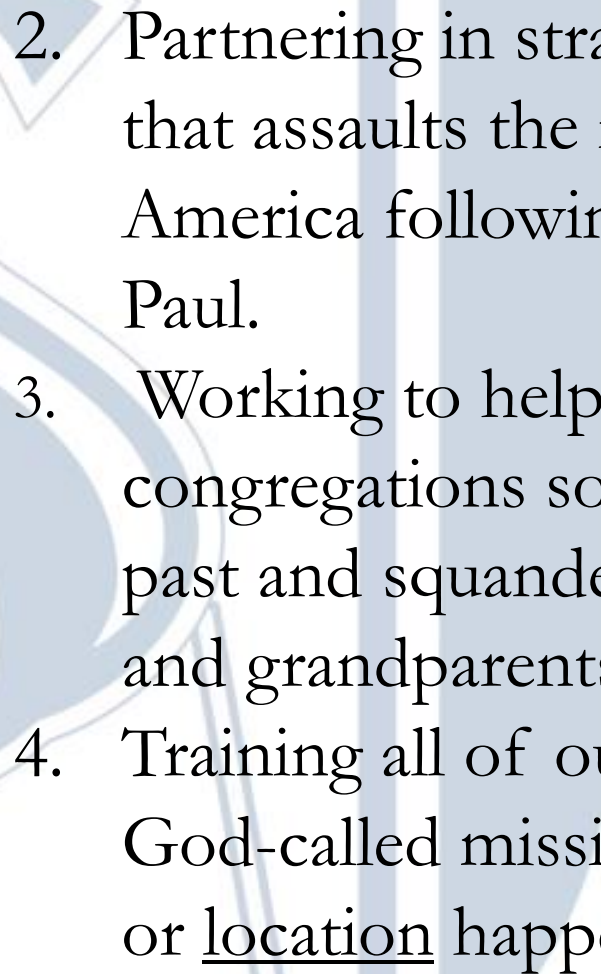
- The Westminster Dictionary (A.D. 1645) captures well what we are after, “...the true idea of preaching is that the preacher should become a mouthpiece for his text, opening it up and applying it as a word from God to his hearers,...in order that the text may speak...and be heard, making each point from his text in such a manner that [his audience] may discern [the voice of God].”
- Preaching that does not present the gospel and call men and women to repent of sin and place their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not gospel preaching. We are not Jewish rabbis or scribes. Good and faithful exposition will be Christological in focus. It will carefully interpret each text in the greater context of the grand redemptive storyline of Scripture showing Jesus as the hero of the Bible.

- Brothers, we are not journey guides, self-help gurus, positive thinkers, entertainers, comedians, or liberal or conservative commentators, parroting the wisdom of the world. We are gospel preachers, Jesus-intoxicated heralds!
- Any theology that does not compel you to plead with men to be reconciled with God is a theology not worth having. Any preaching that does expect the living and powerful Word of God to produce results and usher in conversions is preaching that should be retired to the graveyard where it rightfully belongs.
- Bad preaching will sap the life of a church. It will kill its spirit, dry up its fruit, and eventually empty it. It is preaching that will torpedo a Great Commission Resurgence.

X. We must encourage pastors to see themselves as the head of a gospel missions agency who will lead the way in calling out the called for international assignments but also equip and train all their people to see themselves as missionaries for Jesus regardless of where they live. (Eph. 4:11-16)

- Missions is not a ministry of the church, it is at the heart of the church's identity and essence.
- The strategic and biblical importance of the local church in this regard must be recaptured. Our churches do not exist to serve the Southern Baptist Convention. The Southern Baptist Convention at all levels exists to serve the churches, end of discussion!

- The local church is to be ground zero for the *missio dei*. Here is the “spiritual outpost” for the invasion of enemy territory as we reclaim lost ground for its rightful owner King Jesus. A new vision that I pray will grip the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention is, “every church a church planting church!”
- Pastors must be seized by a vision for the strategic importance of their calling as the head of a gospel mission agency called the local church. This will involve:
 1. Being used by God to call out the called who have an overseas assignment given by our commander-in-chief, the Lord Jesus.

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2. Partnering in strategic and vibrant church planting that assaults the major population centers of North America following closely the pattern of the apostle Paul.
 3. Working to help revitalize existing local congregations so that we do not lose a meaningful past and squander massive assets built by our parents and grandparents.
 4. Training all of our people to see themselves as a God-called missionary no matter what their vocation or location happens to be.

“The missional church avoids ‘tribal’ language, stylized prayer language, unnecessary evangelical pious ‘jargon’, and archaic language that seeks to set a ‘spiritual tone.’ The missional church avoids ‘we-them’ language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs, and dismissive, disrespectful comments about those who differ with us. The missional church avoids sentimental, pompous, ‘inspirational’ talk. Instead, we engage the culture with the gentle, self-deprecating, but joyful irony the gospel creates. Humility + joy = gospel irony and realism. The missional church avoids ever talking as if non-believing people are not present. If you speak and discourse as if your whole neighborhood is present (not just scattered Christians), eventually more and more of your neighborhood will find their way in or be invited. Unless all of the above is the outflow of a truly humble-bold gospel-changed heart, it is all just ‘marketing’ and ‘spin.’”

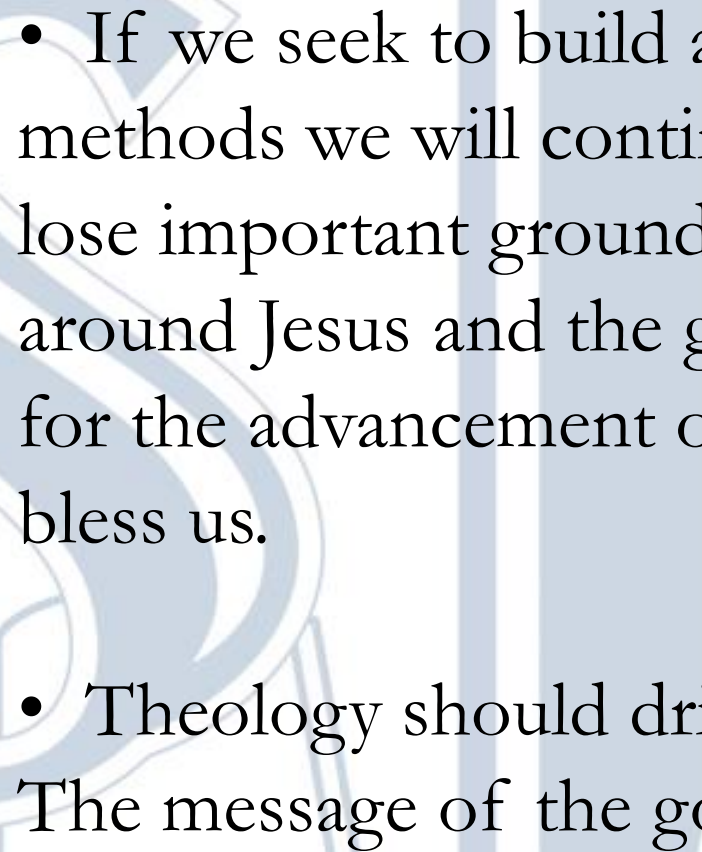
- Tim Keller, “The Missional Church”

XI. We must pledge ourselves to a renewed cooperation that is gospel centered and built around a biblical and theological core and not methodological consensus or agreement.

(Phil. 2:1-5; 4:2-9)

- What will unite Southern Baptist in the future will not be style, methodology and preference. The key will be that what we do is filtered through the purifying waters of Scripture so that we honor Jesus and glorify the Father in all that we do.
- Different contexts will demand different strategies and methods. Cultivating the mind of a missionary we will ask, “What is the best way to reach with the gospel the people I live amongst?”

- Various ethnic believers and social/cultural tribes will worship the same God, adore the same Jesus, believe the same Bible, and preach the same gospel. However, they may meet in different kinds of structure, wear different kinds of clothes, sing different kinds of songs, and engage in different kinds of ministries. The point is simply this: we must treat the United States missiologically and do so with the same seriousness that our international missionaries treat their people groups missiologically. As long as it is done for the glory of God, has biblical warrant, and theological integrity, I say Praise the Lord! So, let's stop griping about organs, choirs and choir robes, guitars, drums, coats and ties, and get on with the real issue of the Great Commission!

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- If we seek to build a consensus around style or methods we will continue to balkanize, fracture and lose important ground. If we will build a consensus around Jesus and the gospel, we can, we will, cooperate for the advancement of God's Kingdom and He will bless us.
 - Theology should drive our cooperation not tradition. The message of the gospel will unite us not methods!

XII. We must accept our constant need to humble ourselves and repent of pride, arrogance, jealousy, hatred, contentions, lying, selfish ambitions, laziness, complacency, idolatries and other sins of the flesh; pleading with our Lord to do what only He can do in us and through us and all for His glory.

(Gal. 5:22-26; James 4:1-10)