

Back to Basics

David Flatt

If someone decides to learn a new skill, he or she must learn the basics of the specific skill. For example, if kids want to learn to play basketball, they must first learn the fundamentals of the game of basketball. They must learn how to dribble, pass, and move their feet. They must learn the rules of the game.

Learning the fundamentals of anything takes time, practice, and patience. Ironically, kids do not typically want to learn the basics and practice. They just want to play the game. Of course, the game cannot be played without first learning the basics and then implementing them on the court.

Then, once the fundamentals are learned, the game becomes exciting to play. Strategy can be used. However, experienced players sometimes develop bad habits. Teams go on losing streaks. Bad habits typically develop as the fundamentals of the game are neglected. To improve play, athletes do not have to learn new skills. They have to get back to basics.

Often likened to an athlete, the life of a Christian requires learning new skills. Christians must learn a new way of thinking, behaving, and interacting in the world. As varied as the life of a Christian is, this life requires learning fundamental truths.

Personal struggles or larger departures from the faith stem from the fundamentals of the faith being neglected and or rejected. To strengthen the fallen, restore the departed, and prevent future departures from the faith, we must get back to the basics.

What Are the Basics?

There is not a passage in the Bible that lists the “basics of the faith.” Yet, there are fundamental truths that establish a framework for which we can use to enjoy a relationship with God and God’s people. Consider the following.

1. The fear of God. The first proverb Solomon wrote was, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...” (Prov. 1:7). Developing reverence and respect for God is the starting point of our relationship with Him. God and His word are not to be taken lightly. Without the fear of God, we will be quick to disregard His rule in our lives. On the contrary, the fear of the Lord will protect us from disrespecting Him.

2. Belief in the Gospel. The good news of what God accomplished for the world through Jesus is the basis of our fellowship with God and His people. The Gospel concerns the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:1-8). God’s use of Jesus is how He defeated sin and reconciled the world to Himself. Unless and until we believe the Gospel, we cannot be saved. There is no other gospel (Gal. 1:6-10).

Also, belief in the Gospel is how we maintain unity in the church. The Gospel is the boundary for our relationship. For example, when Paul met with Peter and John, they determined that they believed the Gospel and were in fellowship with one another (Gal. 2:7-9). If Paul would have rejected Jesus' resurrection from the dead, he would not have been received into fellowship by Peter and John.

3. Adherence to the Apostles' Teaching. The apostles were selected by God to teach the Gospel and organize churches. They were given authority from the resurrected Lord to do their work (Matt. 16:13-19, 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-8). Rejecting the apostles' teaching was and is to reject Christ.

In the early days of the Church, the apostles were teaching disciples of their new life in Christ (Acts 2:42). Disciples looked to the leadership of the apostles for their direction. The apostles organized disciples into local groups known as churches. These groups of believers worshipped together. They preached the Gospel to the surrounding area. If their beliefs or practices were not in harmony with the Gospel or the guidance of the apostles, an apostle would seek to reestablish proper beliefs and practices in the church.

What's the Point?

As Christians individually and as churches collectively, we need to get back to basics. In the epistle of Hebrews, the writer warns against drifting away from the teachings of Christ (Heb. 1:1-4, 2:1). Jesus is the most significant means by which God has spoken to us. If we ignore, neglect, or reject Him, His message, or His apostles, we will lose our salvation.

Therefore, we need to fear God, obey the Gospel, and submit ourselves to the authority of the apostles. This means our beliefs and practices individually and collectively must be supported by the Scriptures. Through a reverent, careful use of the Scriptures, we can understand God's purpose for us. We can implement His word into our lives and churches. When we do this, God will be glorified, and we will grow into the image of Christ.

Conclusion

Appealing to the Gospel and the teachings of the apostles is how we find prohibition or approval for a belief or practice. In principle, this is what Paul meant when he wrote, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17).

The apostle Peter wrote, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:10-11). Having God's approval for our beliefs and practices is how we glorify God. If we act without His approval, we glorify ourselves.

We must learn to fear God and reverence His word. This must be instilled in youth. We must use the Gospel to reshape our lives. We must look to the instructions of the apostles when determining our path forward as a church. When questions arise, we must diligently search the Scriptures.