

Back To The Basics

He's been called "America's Philosopher" and there are currently more than 16 million copies of his books in print, published in 27 languages in 103 countries. But it all got started when one of his essays, after running the gamut of copy machines, bulletin boards, and refrigerator doors, made it home taped to the backpack of a kindergarten student ... whose mother just happened to be a successful literary agent in New York City. By the time it was over, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" would be #1 on the New York Times bestseller list for 43 weeks and remain on the list for 97 weeks, and Fulghum would be well on his way to writing seven best-selling titles. He struck a chord with people because he got back to the basics of life:

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

Most of what I really need to know about how to live and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school. These are the things I learned:

- Share everything.
- Play fair.
- Don't hit people.
- Put things back where you found them.
- Clean up your own mess.
- Don't take things that aren't yours.
- Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
- Wash your hands before you eat.
- Flush.
- Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
- Live a balanced life.
- Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.
- Take a nap every afternoon.
- When you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands and stick together.
- Be aware of wonder.

Remember the little seed in the plastic cup? The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the plastic cup -- they all die. So do we. And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned, the biggest word of all: look.

Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and sane living.

Think what a better world it would be if we all -- the whole world -- had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nation and other nations to always put things back where we found them and cleaned up our own messes. And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

This sermon is about basics too. Webster says that "basic" means: forming the base or essence, constituting or serving as the starting point, fundamental. Basics are not complicated, they are simple ... and in their simplicity lies their power.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14, 19 (KJV) [11] For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. [12] It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? [13] Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? [14] But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. ... [19] I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

As individuals and as a church, we have to make choices about what will be important to us. I can't control what you do, but as a person and as a pastor I can control what I do. This week, the Lord directed me to a phrase in Scripture -- "AS FOR ME."

Joshua 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

1 Samuel 12:23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

1 Chronicles 28:2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: *(HIS SON SOLOMON GOT TO FINISH THE WORK HE PREPARED)*

Psalms 5:7 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

Psalms 55:16-17 As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

Psalms 73:2-3, 16-17 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ... When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

I can't control what you do about it, but here are some of the basics our faith and our church rests on. AS FOR ME, this is what I know!

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

ONE BODY

- **John 17:21** That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
- This is Jesus' final prayer request – and it is the only prayer that the church can answer! The church's greatest power lies in UNITY. What about prayer? Not as powerful as UNIFIED prayer! What about worship? Not as powerful as UNIFIED worship! Etc.

ONE SPIRIT

- **1 Corinthians 12:13** For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.
- There are different styles, different tastes and different preferences in the body, but there is ONE SPIRIT. It is God's Spirit, and I do not have a right to impose my spirit on His church!

ONE HOPE

- **Titus 2:13** Looking for **that blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
- **Hebrews 6:19** Which **hope we have as an anchor of the soul**, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;
- No matter how bad things get here on earth, Christians have a HOPE beyond this life. It is an ANCHOR when things get stormy!

ONE LORD

- Paul lets us know that the Jesus we serve today is the same God who created everything that exists in the beginning!
- **Colossians 1:15-19** Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;
- **Colossians 2:9** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

- We are not a "Jesus Only" church, but we are a "Jesus Name" church! The Bible says that there is one throne in Heaven, and there is One that sits on that throne, and His name is Jesus!

ONE FAITH

- Sometimes the Bible speaks simply of FAITH, but other times it speaks of THE FAITH. It is not just indicating individual belief, but the entire body of truth that we believe about Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:23
1 Timothy 1:2

Paul preached the faith which once he destroyed Timothy was Paul's son in the faith

1 Timothy 4:1
1 Timothy 5:8
1 Timothy 6:10
2 Timothy 3:8

You can depart from the faith
You can deny the faith
You can err from the faith
You can be reprobate concerning the faith

1 Corinthians 16:13
2 Corinthians 13:5
Ephesians 4:13
Colossians 1:23
Colossians 2:7
Titus 1:13
2 Timothy 4:7

Stand fast in the faith
Examine yourself, whether you are in the faith
Come to the unity of the faith
Be grounded and settled in the faith
Be established in the faith
Be sound in the faith
Keep the faith

Jude 1:3

Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints!

- It does matter what you believe!
- Not everyone is going to Heaven; not every church is right!

ONE BAPTISM

- Baptism is not an option; there is no such thing in the Bible as a Christian who was not baptized!
- **John 3:5** Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
- The Bible says that there is only "one baptism" – so if there is only one right way to be baptized, WHAT IS IT?

WE MUST BE IMMersed IN WATER (MODE)

- Because Jesus was baptized by immersion
- Because every baptism in the Bible was by immersion
- Because that's precisely what the word baptism means
- Because it is the best portrayal of a burial and resurrection

WE MUST BE BAPTIZED IN JESUS' NAME (FORMULA)

- **Every baptism in Acts was performed in Jesus' name.**

THE DAY OF PENTECOST: Acts 2:38 – be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins

THE SAMARITANS: Acts 8:16 – they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus

THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS: Acts 10:48 – he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord

THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN: Acts 19:5 – they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus

PAUL'S BAPTISM: Acts 22:16 – And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.
- **The epistles teach baptism in the name of Jesus.**

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Colossians 1:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
- **Jesus is the only name with the power to save us.**

Philippians 2:9-11 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

THIS IS A "ONENESS" CHURCH!

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is **one body**, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling; **One Lord, one faith, one baptism**, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the **Holy Ghost**.

- It is all too easy, unknowingly and for apparently good reasons, to miss the purposes of God in any generation. If we want to avoid that in this generation, we must be diligent to follow the lessons of the Word of God exactly. Look at these two Scriptures:

- **Acts 1:8 (NIV)** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- **Acts 6:7 (NIV)** So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.
- The narrative contained between Acts 1:8 and Acts 6:7 covers a period of about ten years. It contains an incredibly important lesson to the church that most people miss entirely: **BLESSING IS NOT A SURE SIGN OF GOD'S FAVOR; OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD IS THE ONLY WAY TO PLEASE HIM.**
- During these years, the Jerusalem church was blessed with divine visitation, miracles of healing, holy boldness, and numerical growth. The church grew in spite of persecution, opposition, and internal disputes. There were 3000 people in Acts 2:41, 5000 men in Acts 4:4, multitudes of men and women in Acts 5:14, and even a great company of Jewish priests in Acts 6:7. **BUT IT ALL HAPPENED INSIDE JERUSALEM!**
- Jerusalem might have been enjoying the blessing of the Lord, and many souls within her walls may have even come to salvation during that ten year span ... but what about the 99.99% of people alive in the world at that time who did not live in that city? What about the other cultures that God specifically told them to reach?
- The real issue here is this: How much blessing does the church have to receive before she is willing and ready to fulfill the Great Commission left to her by Jesus Christ? One of the great dangers when we go from a struggling small congregation to a successful larger congregation is that we lose our cutting edge and our dependence on God's power. We become self-centered instead of God centered, more focused on ease than on evangelism.
- In many of our conferences, campmeetings, conventions, and church services, our focus is mainly on "our Jerusalem," that it may grow and prosper so that it may continue to minister to US! We have "received power" (the first promise of Acts 1:8) but we have not "become witnesses" (the second promise of Acts 1:8). And the second promise is much more significant than the first!
- The real test of any visitation of God or experience in the Spirit is whether we go out to become witnesses for Jesus!
- The seemingly natural desire of the Christian to stay within the warm confines of the church is not of God's Spirit! On the contrary, He desires to lead us outside of our four walls to become witnesses!

- Thousands of Christians use the baptism of the Holy Spirit for purposes other than the purpose it was given! For that, we will someday give answer to God. WE ARE STEWARDS, NOT BOSSES, OF HIS BLESSINGS! The baptism of the Holy Spirit is so exciting that we think the experience is all there is to it. Not so!
- This was the heart of the battle in the early church. They did start out in obedience to the second half of Acts 1:8, but they stopped too soon. They wanted to reach out in Jerusalem, AMONG THEIR OWN KIND, but they did not want to go to the ends of the earth – or even Samaria!
- **Acts 1:6 (KJV)** When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
- The early church needed a reversal in their thinking! They wanted to sit in a state of spiritual blessing in Jerusalem and have the nations flow to them. Jesus wanted them to be servants of the Kingdom who would leave their comfort zone and go to others, just as He had left heaven to come to us! Their responsibility was not just to care for the lost who came to find them, but to seek them out!
- The modern church has also embraced this faulty mentality in at least three ways:
 - The “Come To Me” Mentality
 - The “Spirit Will Do The Work” Mentality
 - The “Perfect The Church First” Mentality (four stage view of 1:8)
- To be brutally honest, the question might now be asked, “SO WHAT?” So what if the church holds these concepts? So what if we are not as evangelistic as we should be? Can’t we still just have church for ourselves? This is the answer is just as brutally honest: LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JERUSALEM CHURCH!
- In the early years, the Jerusalem church grew strong both spiritually and numerically, and even the attacks and setbacks they experienced quickly turned to gain and expansion. Even their problems seemed to work for them rather than against them.
- But the honeymoon was shattered with the martyrdom of Stephen and the intense persecution under the direction of Saul of Tarsus. Suddenly, disciples are being scattered everywhere, and while things grow worse in Jerusalem, great things are happening in Judea and even Samaria! When the church wouldn’t go on their own, God gave them a shove!
- **Acts 8:1 (KJV)** And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.
- In one swift act of persecution, God forced obedience on His church, compelling them to move! The reaction of the early church was the same as ours would be – “great lamentation” that their promising young CEO (Stephen) had been cut down in his prime, and all their plans for “ministering to the widows” were now in disarray. But Stephen’s death probably resulted in more obedience to the Great Commission than any other single event in the history of the early church, and was even a major factor in the conversion of Paul.
- **Acts 8:2 (KJV)** And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.
- The message hidden in these events is both awesome and fearful – God loves lost people so much that He will allow ANYTHING to happen in order to fulfill His purpose of reaching them! God is not primarily committed to successful ministries or even great churches – He is primarily committed to the Great Commission.
- GOD BELIEVES IN HELL! So much that He robed Himself in a body of flesh and died in the most hideous way possible on the cross to save mankind from it. He believes in Hell enough to want His children to live with the same motivation, that we will do anything possible to reach lost people.
- IF WE WILL NOT GO, God only has two alternatives when we continue to rest in our “Jerusalem comfort zone” ...
 - PERSECUTION, to drive us out
 - SUBSTITUTION, to find someone else who will go willingly
- Nothing is secure, nothing is permanent, nothing is guaranteed to have God’s favor forever, even if it seems to have been built by Him and to have His anointing. ONLY THE CHURCH THAT OBEYS HIS COMMANDS CAN BE ASSURED OF HIS CONTINUING FAVOR!
- It is not that the Jerusalem church rejected the Great Commission, it’s just that they could not seem to manage the kind of vision and commitment that was required in this period of church history. So, God used persecution first (with some results) and then substitution when they continued to resist.
- When the Apostle Paul had his life-changing encounter with God and came to the church at Jerusalem to share his vision of preaching to the Gentiles, the brethren sent him back to Tarsus (his birthplace) so that he couldn’t stir up any more revolutionary ideas!

- When Peter is sent to the household of Cornelius (a gentile) to preach the message of salvation, he does so very reluctantly; he knows that he will be walking through a minefield with his brethren.
- **Acts 10:47 (KJV)** Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?
- That's not the language of vision; it is the language of reluctant obedience struggling with deep opposition!
- **Acts 11:19-21 (KJV)** Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.
- Antioch was a mostly Gentile city, and it is inconceivable that they should ignore all but a small minority of Jews, assuming they were the only ones God wanted to save! But that's what the first group did! However, thank God there was a second group not from Jerusalem (men of Cyprus and Cyrene) that preached to the Greeks – AND THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH THEM!
- This is a moment of destiny, when the church at Antioch was born! Not just a few transplants from the Jerusalem Jewish subculture, but some sinfully irreverent, Biblically illiterate Gentiles came to God!
- Jerusalem never did know how to deal with revolutionary revivalists like the Apostle Paul, who continually jumped fences, ignored boundaries, and broke rules to win the lost. That's why Jerusalem never sent out history's greatest missionary – Antioch sent him out!
- The Jerusalem church was originally chosen, richly anointed, full of New Testament teaching, experiencing amazing miracles and basking in rich worship. But God still turned His attention to Antioch because Jerusalem would not embrace God's command to witness! If our little church building and program becomes the sum total of our vision, it will not last beyond a second or third generation!
- BUT GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES ARE DIFFERENT! Generation after generation, they run with vision. No matter what they achieve, they have never arrived, because there is always one more soul just beyond their borders that needs to hear about Jesus! Jerusalem held on to their resources, but Antioch accepted that Jesus had the right to demand of them any resource He wanted to use – people, prayer, finance, whatever! They also accepted that the Great Commission was at the very top of God's priority list.
- Jerusalem was unwilling to CHANGE to reach the culture of the world around it; instead, they demanded that the Gentiles become Jewish before they could get saved. You must speak our Jewish lingo, learn our Jewish customs, and like our Jewish music! THE SAME THING HAPPENS TODAY, and because change is hard, most churches simply do not want to be uncomfortable. They just want to touch their Jerusalem and leave it at that.
- There are only two New Testament church models in the Bible, the Jerusalem Church and the Antioch Church. We have to be one or the other ... and the choice is ours.
- The Antioch church was full of risk-takers. What about us today?
- **Acts 11:25-26 (KJV)** Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
- But what will the other Christians think? That's not the question that begs to be answered. WHAT WILL JESUS THINK?
- **C.T. Studd:** "Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell, I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell."
- **ILLUSTRATION:** Life-Saving Station

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat. But the devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Some of the members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it as sort of a club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The life-saving motif still prevailed in this club's decoration, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club initiations were held.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick and even of different cultures, so they didn't seem to know the proper way to act after being rescued. The beautiful new club was in chaos, so the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities since they were unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon life-saving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But after a lengthy and tense meeting, they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could just begin their own life-saving station down the coast. So they did just that.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another "spin-off" life-saving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that sea coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.