

What We Believe Pt. 7

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, September 9, 2018

Main Theme – Considering the Sixteen Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God – “Part 9”

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - Women’s Ministry – Resumes Tuesday, Sept. 11, @ 6:30pm
 - Christian Youth Club – Resuming Friday, Sept. 14, @ 5:30pm
- **Upcoming Events (SPECIAL)**
 - Fall Mission’s Emphasis – Ginger Asel (9/23) & Brian Mugabe (9/27)
 - October Missions Trip – Partnering w/ Mission E4 in Haiti (October ’18)
 - OCC National Collection Week – November 12–19 (More Info to Come...)
- **SPECIAL THANKS**
 - FAMILY FUN DAY – Special Thanks for the MANY who participated! Kristie B.

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers. Two offerings will be collected today:

- The FIRST offering goes to support the ongoing ministry/function of this assembly
- The SECOND offering goes to support a variety of missionaries (foreign/domestic)

May the Lord BLESS YOU as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH**
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INTRODUCTIONS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what God has for you today! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

For those who have not been here—and as a reminder/reaffirmation for those who have been present—we are in the midst of an EXTENDED SERIES on the fundamentals of our faith. i.e., We are identifying and discussing the 16 Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God.

NOTE – Thus far, we have covered a 7 of the 16 Fundamental Truths. We have touched upon an ARRAY OF TOPICS, including the Authority of Scripture, the Trinitarian Nature of God, the Humanity and the Deity of Christ, the Fall of Man, God’s Plan of Salvation, Sanctification (i.e., the Act and the Life-Long Process), and more.

Last Sunday we addressed the MISSION of the Church of Jesus Christ. i.e., “What are the overarching goals we are seeking to accomplish/achieve?” As was noted, the 10th Fundamental Truth provides a concise, biblical RESPONSE to this question: **SLIDE**

10) WE BELIEVE that the Church of Jesus Christ exists:

- To WORSHIP God
- To Reach the LOST
- To Make DISCIPLES

Thus, there is a MULTIDIRECTIONAL MISSION of the Church

- There is an UPWARD call – as we are called to WORSHIP God
- There is an OUTWARD call – as we’re called to REACH the lost
- There is an INWARD call – as we are called to MAKE DISCIPLES

KEY – The local church that seeks true spiritual health and vitality must engage in all THREE tasks!

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

NOTE – This morning I would like to spend time examining other Fundamental Truths related to the OPERATION/FUNCTION of the Church of Jesus Christ. We will look closely at TWO additional Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God: **SLIDE**

11) WE BELIEVE that a divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the purpose of leading the Church in the worship of God, world evangelization and Christian discipleship.

6) WE BELIEVE and practice two ordinances: a) Water Baptism by immersion following conversion and b) Holy Communion as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #11 PT. 1

Let's begin with the 11th Fundamental Truth of the Assemblies of God (BRIEFLY considered):

11) WE BELIEVE that a divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the purpose of leading the Church in the worship of God, world evangelization and Christian discipleship.

KEY – Herein you can see the connection between the 10th and the 11th Fundamental Truths. I.e., God has provided a leadership structure for the Church SO THAT THE CHURCH might be effective in accomplishing its three-fold task of a) worship, b) evangelism and c) discipleship.

NOTE – The Church—like ANY organization—must have structure, and a VITAL COMPONENT to any structure (secular or spiritual) is LEADERSHIP. As John Maxwell notes, “Whether in the corporate or the church world, it all rises or falls on leadership.”

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #11 PT. 2

Though we might be tempted to become OVERLY-SPIRITUAL in this arena (DOWNPLAYING the role and significance of effective leadership), Scripture does NOT. Rather, the Bible demonstrates again and again that God has ALWAYS worked through human leaders.

NOTE – God has demonstrated a commitment to work through human leaders in both the Old and New Testaments. It was the Lord who CALLED and USED figures like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Deacons of the Church and more in the establishment and furtherance of His plan on earth.

KEY – In many ways, the Bible is a narrative REplete with God's work through human leaders!

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #11 PT. 3

NOTE – The New Testament RECOGNIZES a God-ordained LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE:

Ephesians 4:11–16 (NIV, 1984)

11 It was he [i.e., Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Q. WHAT are the various elements/components of that leadership structure?

A. The **5-FOLD** Ministry Offices (i.e., Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Teacher, Pastor) (v. 11)

Q. WHAT is the PURPOSE of the 5-Fold Ministry Offices? What is THEIR MISSION? (v. 12)

A. To ensure that the Church is effective in the work of Worship, Evangelism & Discipleship

Q. WHEN will the task and work of this 5-Fold Leadership Structure END?

A. WHEN the work of the Church is FULLY realized in every way! (v. 13–16)

Q. WHAT are the unique characteristics of each Ministry Office?

- Consider the HAND ANALOGY in order to explain the various roles
- Consider the need for BALANCE among the 5 (operation of ALL roles)

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #11 PT. 4

1) It is VITAL for the Church to know its MISSION (Fundamental Truth 10)

KEY – Remember that it is the church that doesn't KNOW its business that goes OUT of business!

2) It is VITAL for godly leaders to play their role in ADVANCING that mission

KEY – Scripture has MUCH to say to those who are leaders of the Church of Christ...

James 3:1 (NIV)

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Matthew 20:25–28

25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

1 Peter 5:1–4

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Timothy 3:1–7 (cf. Titus 1:5–9)

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full[a] respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

3) It is VITAL for the Church to properly RESPOND TO/SUPPORT godly leadership...

KEY – Scripture has MUCH to say to the Church along this train of thought (consider):

Hebrews 13:17

17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #6 PT. 1

Having provided a birds-eye view of the 11th Fundamental Truth (LEADERSHIP of the Church), let us consider the 6th Fundamental Truth (PRACTICES of the Church). EVERY religion of the world PRACTICES PRESCRIBED RITES, etc. The same is TRUE of biblical Christianity. The 6th Fundamental Truth speaks to this reality:

6) WE BELIEVE and practice two ordinances: a) Water Baptism by immersion following conversion and b) Holy Communion as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.

KEY – Water Baptism and Holy Communion HAVE BEEN ordinances of the Church of Christ Jesus from its INCEPTION. Moreover, they will CONTINUE until the Lord Returns at the end of the age!

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #6 PT. 2

NOTE – As we wade into the depths (albeit briefly) of this Fundamental Truth, we must consider a KEY TERM that appears herein: ORDINANCES.

The Assemblies of God was DELIBERATE in the selection and usage of this word. Other fellowships and denominations prefer to use the term SACRAMENT(S). Many of us, particularly if we come from a Roman Catholic background, are familiar with/inclined to use this term IN RELATION TO Water Baptism and Communion.

KEY – WE DELIBERATELY AVOID THE USE OF THIS WORD.

Q. WHY? Why is the word SACRAMENT rejected and/or resisted?

A. Simply stated, this word has a meaning beyond the bounds of Scripture.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #6 PT. 3

KEY – The term SACRAMENT connotes the idea that special grace is IMPARTED to those who PRACTICE certain rituals. i.e., Grace (e.g., divine pardon, the gift of eternal life, etc.) is BESTOWED when you are baptized or receive Communion.

This is HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC, as it is rooted in the belief that grace is RECEIVED by performing a religious work/action v. through faith in the work of Christ alone. This is at odds with our most fundamental beliefs (FT. 5) and the clear teaching of Scripture:

Ephesians 2:8–9

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #6 PT. 4

There is NO biblical support for the belief that religious observances are the CHANNEL by which we receive grace. Although the practices of Baptism and Communion ARE mandated in the New Testament, NO special/saving grace is ever attached to these rites.

i.e., Observing Communion or Baptism CANNOT SAVE YOU. Only FAITH in Christ can!

KEY – Thus, the Assemblies of God prefers the term ORDINANCE to Sacrament.

6) WE BELIEVE and practice two ORDINANCES: a) Water Baptism by immersion following conversion and b) Holy Communion as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.

The term is derived from the Latin 'ordo' – indicating an ORDER. Relating to the practices of Water Baptism and Communion, the word ORDINANCE suggests that these ceremonies have been instituted by the COMMAND or ORDER of Christ. He ordered that the Church observe these practices, NOT because of any mystical power to save, but because they SYMBOLIZE that which has already taken place/what He has done for sinful humanity.

Q. But what is the meaning and significance of these two ordinances?

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #6 PT. 5

Let's begin with WATER BAPTISM...

1) Water Baptism was ordered/commanded by Christ

Matthew 28:18–19

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

2) Water Baptism is a highly symbolic observance

-Baptism symbolizes the WASHING AWAY of sin experienced in the life of the believer. Christ has pardoned my crimes by faith. Baptism portrays or reflects the reality of what has happened spiritually!

-Baptism symbolizes my IDENTIFICATION with Christ. Christ died, was buried and rose again to the newness of life. Submersion in water is a picture of my death and burial. Coming up out of the water symbolizes resurrection and the newness of life!

This is WHY submersion v. sprinkling is vital. It maintains the picture of identification with Christ!

KEY – Since baptism pictures what has ALREADY TAKEN PLACE in the life of the believer and REPRESENTS a believer's connection to Christ, BAPTISM IS RESERVED FOR CHRISTIANS ALONE. Thus, it is NOT an ordinance for infants or for non-believers. This notion is expressed clearly in the 6th Fundamental Truth...

6) WE BELIEVE and practice two ordinances: a) Water Baptism by immersion FOLLOWING conversion . . .

3) Lastly, baptism connects an individual believer with the Church of Christ

Biblically, baptism was always a very public observance. i.e., It was something done amongst the community of believers.

It is true that water baptism signifies identification with Christ. However, it also signifies identification with the Body of Christ—the Church. Those who are baptized in water are initiated into the broader community of faith, giving public testimony to the world of their allegiance to Christ AND connection w. His people. This seems to be a major reason why NT believers were baptized almost immediately upon conversion. In a world that was hostile to the faith, it was important for new believers to take their stand with other Christians.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #6 PT. 6

Let's continue with HOLY COMMUNION...

1) Holy Communion was ordered/commanded by Christ

Matthew 26:26–28 (NIV, 1984)

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 22:19–20 (NIV, 1984)

19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

2) Holy Communion serves as an ongoing activity of remembrance

The bread symbolizes and represents the Body of Christ, broken on our behalf. The fruit of the vine symbolizes and represents the Blood of Christ, shed for us all. Christ has instituted Communion so that we would NEVER forget what He has done for us. In a hectic and crazy world, Communion provides the opportunity to pause, remember and reorient to Christ.

3) Holy Communion—like Water Baptism—is public/communal in nature

From its inception, Communion was practiced in the context of a group!

There is benefit to partaking of the Lord's Supper as a family in Christ. In a world of division where disharmony abounds, Communion serves as unifying force. It reminds us that—despite our differences—we all share a common need (deliverance from sin) and a common Savior (Christ Jesus). In this manner, Communion unites people across all lines of division, reminding us that we are in this thing together!

Communion provides for us the opportunity to commune with the Lord as His sons/daughters. Communion provides for us the opportunity to commune with one another as sons and daughters (i.e., FAMILY) in Him.

CONCLUSIONS

Volumes more could be said on the topics of Church Leadership, Water Baptism and Holy Communion. But with the time we had, I pray that I was effective—to some degree—providing an informative overview of such topics! May we continue to heed and properly respond to the truths contained in the 11th and 6th Fundamental Truths of the Assembly of God:

11) WE BELIEVE that a divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the purpose of leading the Church in the worship of God, world evangelization and Christian discipleship.

6) WE BELIEVE and practice two ordinances: a) Water Baptism by immersion following conversion and b) Holy Communion as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.