

# IDENTITY

WHO WE ARE

BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH



## INTRODUCTION

There are many ideas of what a church should be. People both inside churches and outside churches have varying and even conflicting notions of who the church is or what it is.

At Bethany Baptist Church we want to know who God has declared us to be in His Word so that we can live as He desires. We don't want to be confused about ourselves, and we don't want others to be confused about us.

Therefore, we affirm that we are...

## A GATHERED PEOPLE

### WHO ARE CALLED

The God of heaven calls into existence things that do not exist (Ro. 4:17). Therefore, we know that He is our Maker, and we are His creatures. He knew us before we were born, and He shaped us as He pleased (Ps. 139:13-16; Is. 44:2). We exist because of Him, and we exist for Him (Ro. 11:36).

Out of His sovereign grace and tender mercy, the Triune God delivered us from darkness and brought us into light (1 Pe. 2:9). By calling us to himself, the Father stopped us from going our own way and transferred us into the kingdom of His Son (Co. 1:13). This Christ united us to himself, and He calls us His body and his bride (Ep. 5:22-33). He also placed His Spirit in us so that we are now His saints – His holy ones (Ro. 1:7; 1 Pe. 1:2).

### WHO ARE ASSEMBLED

#### *By Christ and by His Word*

The Good News about Jesus Christ transforms our individual lives, but it also shapes our collective life at Bethany (Co. 1:24-29). Through Gospel proclamation God gathers people together into a new community – a church. We unite because we believe what the Scriptures say about Jesus, confess the same truths about Him, and commit to follow Him together. In our weekly gatherings on the Lord's day, we worship Christ and sit under his Word.

#### *Around His ordinances*

Our life as a church centers around two practices which our Lord instituted. **Baptism** is the immersion in water of a person who professes faith in the risen Christ and whose life reveals true fruit of repentance. By baptizing a person, we affirm that the individual is indeed a fellow disciple of Jesus, and we welcome them into fellowship with us. Baptism, then, is the way a convert enters the life of the church (Mt. 28:18-20; Ac. 2:41; 8:12). **The Lord's Supper** is the church's family meal. As the church is a spiritual family in the Lord, so the Supper is our spiritual meal. When our church gathers, we share bread and a cup together. In so doing, we remember our Lord's broken body and shed blood, and we identify who is a part of Christ's body. At this table, we celebrate our unity in him, and we anticipate the day when we will feast with him in his kingdom (1 Co. 10:17; 11:23-26).

#### *With and for each other*

The church is a spiritual family because we are a group of people united by the Spirit of Christ (Ro. 12:4-5). We are also a new kind of community. Our Creator made us for relationship with him and with others, and we find both in our church. We are brothers and sisters who watch over, care for, confront, and even discipline each other (Mt. 18:15-20). We devote ourselves to each other's good, confessing sin to each other and praying for each other (Ja. 5:16). We do all this so that each one of us will grow up into Christ who is our church's only Lord and head (Ep. 4:15).

# A GROWING PEOPLE

## WHO ARE RESTING

Jesus Christ's perfect life, substitutionary death, and once-for-all resurrection are our only hope – our confidence in life and in death. We recognize that no work of ours could ever earn us favor with God (Ep. 2:8-9). The Father has accepted us because we are hidden in the Son and are clothed in his righteousness (Ro. 5:19). This we believe by faith, holding to things we can't see, and this knowledge cultivates a sweet enjoyment of our salvation (Is. 12:1-3). Our name, Bethany, points to this refreshment, for the little town was a resting place for Jesus. We aspire, then, to be a people filled with joy, not shame; courage, not fear; and grace, not condemnation.

## WHO ARE STRIVING

At the same time, we affirm that we have not entered our final rest (He. 4:9-11). Our war against sin still rages, and our race of life is still unfinished. We want to know the love of Christ and to be filled with all the fullness of God (Ep. 3:19). We desire to put off the old self, be renewed in our minds, and put on the new self (Ep. 4:20-24). We long to be controlled by the Spirit (Ep. 5:18). Therefore, we labor to put our sin to death, to repent of it, and to put on Christ (Ro. 13:14). In all these endeavors, we know that the one who began a good work in us will bring it to completion (Ph. 1:6). We know that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Ro. 8:38-39). We know that he is preparing us now to be the trophies of his grace in eternity (Ep. 2:4-7). Therefore, our salvation from beginning to end, our faith and our labors, are all to the glory of God.

## SUMMARY

This is our identity. This is who we are.

Bethany Baptist Church is *a gathering of people who are...*

- ***Formed by the Word***
- ***United to Christ***
- ***Rescued by grace***
- ***Living by faith***
- ***Existing for God's glory***