

Axioms For A Great Commission Resurgence

Acts 1:4-8

Introduction: 1) Following His resurrection Jesus spent time with His disciples for 40 days preparing them for their assignment once He had ascended. He led them out to Mount Olivet where He would return back to the Father. However, just prior to His ascension, the disciples wanted to have a theological conversation concerning matters of eschatology. Specifically they wanted to know, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (v.6). Jesus did not rebuke them for asking what is certainly an interesting question. His response did, however, indicate that it was not the most important question. His response reveals that the better question is this, “what should we do until you do come again and establish Your kingdom?” To that question He provides a definitive answer in the Acts version of the Great Commission found in verse 8, “Be my witnesses.” In essence 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.”

2) 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. We have reached, many of us believe, what Alvin Reid describes as “a tipping point.” We have tragically devolved into “a giant movement now in decline,” experiencing far too much ineffectiveness in gospel ministry and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

3) How do we change this and experience a much needed course correction? How do we, by God's grace and for His glory, get in sync with the Savior's heart, a heart that cried, "I have come to seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). I share, humbly and with no illusion that I have all the answers, 12 axioms, or values, that I believe can move us in the right direction. Many of these principles are being talked about all across the Southern Baptist Convention, and people get excited and energized when that happens. 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.

4) It is not too bold to say that both frustration and anticipation is building among our people, and the time is right to put the former behind us and to pursue the latter with a laser beam focus guided and directed by what so many believe God is leading us to embrace. 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. What must happen to make us ready for and get us moving in a God sent Great Commission Resurgence? My agenda is purposefully positive and forward looking. I share what I pray will be an encouragement to all of us.

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. We must long to see Him "come to have first place in everything" (Col. 1:18). To miss this is to miss everything and to never get out of the starting blocks.

- Southern Baptists need to become more than ever “a Jesus intoxicated people,” returning to our first love. (Rev. 2:4-5). A Christ-centered life must, and it will, will inform our theology and inspire our missional service.
- We must love Him, worship Him, adore Him, exult in Him, share Him and exemplify Him. Within the family of Southern Baptists, we have often been described as “people of the Book.” This is a good thing, and it must never be lost. However, if we are indeed a people of the book, then we need to be in love with the person the book points us to: Jesus!
- 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!”
- We need the ministry of the Holy Spirit to lead us to a new and fresh intimacy and communion with Jesus. This must be first and foremost. Any other agenda is to get the first and most important thing wrong.

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.” It means loving the people Jesus loves and reaching out to those rejected and even scorned by the Pharisees of our day. Legalism by the Pharisees of our day embedded in our traditions to which we are often blind must be exposed, confessed, and repented of. A gospel-centered agenda can make this happen.

- 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. We must be gospel-centered from beginning to end.
- Pursing in all things the “glory of God” means we will be theocentric and not anthropocentric in our worship and work. The supremacy of God in Christ thru the Spirit in all things must be the engine that drives us.
- 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. It will remind us that we do not obey in order to be accepted; we obey because we are accepted by God in Christ!
- Once more an attractive and contagious joy in Jesus will draw people to the Savior whose glory radiates through transformed lives made new in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
- 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. We must get it right once again if we are to experience a Great Commission Resurgence. No gospel, no Great Commission Resurgence. It really is that simple.

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)

- Southern Baptists won the “battle for the Bible” that began in 1979. Wonderful men of God like Jimmy Draper, Paige Patterson, Paul Pressler, Adrian Rogers, and Jerry Vines spilt their blood and put their ministries on the line because they saw what the poison of liberalism was doing to our Convention and its institution. These men are heroes of the faith and what they did must be honored and never forgotten.
- However, and hear me well, the “war for the Bible” is not over and it will never end until Jesus returns. Launched by Satan in the Garden of Eden, “has God said,” will continue to be under assault, and we must ever be on guard and ready to answer those who question its veracity and accuracy.
- Already, as Greg Beale warns in the book *The Erosion of Inerrancy*, evangelicals are backing away from or redefining into insignificance the idea of inerrancy. A younger generation of Southern Baptists will eventually face this challenge, and you must not squander away precious theological ground that is absolutely essential to a Great Commission Resurgence.
- Russ Bush was absolutely correct when I heard him say in a seminary classroom in the early 1980's, “the question of biblical inspiration is ultimately a question of Christological identity.” Why? Because Jesus believed the Holy Scriptures to be the completely true and trustworthy Word of God! Even Rudolf Bultmann said this, he just believes Jesus got it wrong! Well hear me, and hear me well. To

deny inerrancy is to say that Jesus was wrong and that you are smarter than He. That is both heresy and blasphemy. It is spiritually suicidal!

- Are you questioning inerrancy? Then repent! Do you deny inerrancy? Then go join another denomination. We will love you and pray for you, but we do not want you infecting our people with a spiritual disease that is always fatal to the Church of the Lord Jesus. Inerrancy and the sufficiency of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice is not up for debate in the Southern Baptist Convention. It alone will give us the necessary weapons to take on and take down what *Newsweek* (8-13-08) calls “a newly muscular secularism.”

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.
- The ultimate motivation for the Great Commission is love of God and a passion to be on mission with Him. After all the Great Commission is His mission! But, flowing out of love for God, also will be a genuine love for people, something too many of us have lost somewhere along the way. The results have devastated our witness.

- If we don't love them we have no right to expect them to listen. If we do not serve them we have no reason to expect them to trust us.
- Much could be said here but I will narrow my focus to an area of particular concern. A Great Commission Resurgence is not the same thing as a moral reformation, and it is certainly not a revival of political activism. Now, do not misunderstand. It is our Christian duty to be good citizens, vote our convictions, and promote good and godly policies. The end of slavery, the right of all Americans to vote and Civil Rights legislation quickly and easily come to mind. However, our commission is to promote the gospel and not crawl in bed with the government, political parties and politicians. As John MacArthur so well says, "true Christianity is more concerned with saving souls than it is with gaining votes....Rather than concentrating on political issues and debates, believers should be consumed [emphasis mine] with their responsibility as Christ's ambassadors" (*Right Thinking...*, 122).
- Governmental legislation will not stop the moral plunge of our nation and the world, but the gospel will! Our hope is not in Republicans or Democrats, Congress or Capitol Hill. Our hope, the world's hope, is in Calvary's Hill and a crucified and risen Savior named King Jesus. Love for God and love for our neighbor demands that we not get sidetracked by political machinations. Neither Jesus nor His disciples exhausted their time trying to change the government. They spent their time trying to change the souls of men. We must do no less. Do not forget it is Jesus who said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

- If we love Jesus as we should, we will love sinners as we ought and pursue them as He did. We will not condemn them, that is the business of God; we will love them, serve them and tell them of a Savior who cares for their soul. The silence of our gospel witness may be an evidence of the coldness and hardness of our hearts. The Great Commission and the Great Commandments, they always go hand in hand.

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. For example:
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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!
- Now, what are we to make of all this? Can we, and if so, how can we move ahead and work together?
 - No one has been more helpful in helping us think rightly and wisely in this area than Dr. Al Mohler of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His paradigm of “theological triage” gets to the heart of how we can think well theologically. In *Theology for the Church*, (930-32), he addresses the subject, and here is how he puts it: “One essential task of the pastor is to feed the congregation and to assist Christians to think theologically in order to demonstrate discernment and authentic discipleship.

The pastor’s concentration is a necessary theological discipline. The pastor must develop the ability to isolate what is most important in terms of

theological gravity from that which is less important. I call this the process of *theological triage*.

The pastor must learn to discern different levels of theological importance. First-order doctrines are those that are fundamental and essential to the Christian faith. The pastor's theological instincts should seize upon any compromise on doctrines such as the full deity and humanity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of atonement, and essentials such as justification by faith alone. Where such doctrines are compromised, the Christian faith falls.

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. That is to say, one may detect an error in a doctrine at this level and still acknowledge that the person in error remains a believing Christian. At the same time these differences can become so acute that it is difficult to function together in the local congregation over such an expansive theological difference.

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. Christians who agree on an entire range of theological issues and doctrines may disagree over matters related to the timing and sequence of events related to Christ's return. Yet such ecclesiastical debates, while understood to be deeply important because of their biblical nature and connection to the gospel, do not constitute a ground for separation among believing Christians.

Without a proper sense of priority and discernment, the congregation [and denomination] is left to consider every theological issue to be a matter of potential conflict or, at the other extreme to see no doctrines as worth defending if conflict is in any way possible.”

Brothers and sisters, some things are worth fighting over, and some things are not. Some things are worth dividing over, and some things are not. At the Building Bridges Conference I put it like this, and I have not changed my mind: “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.” The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* is a solid confession for building theological consensus for Great Commission Cooperation. The promise of the Conservative Resurgence was that eventually we would find common, biblical, theological ground that would be more than enough to get us focused on the Great Commission. I think we have it, and I, for one, am ready to move ahead, and I believe the vast majority of Southern Baptists are as well!

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)

- Southern Baptists were born, in part, out of a racist context and have a racist heritage. That will forever be to our shame. By God's grace and the Spirit's conviction, we publically repented of this in 1995 on our 150th anniversary, but there is still much work to be done. The Southern Baptist Convention remains a mostly middle-class, mostly white network of mostly declining churches. If you

doubt what I am saying look around today, visit a State Convention, attend an annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting, or drop in on 99% of our churches on any given Sunday. We can integrate the military, athletics and the workplace, but we can't integrate the body of Christ! Shame on us!

- Until we get right about race I am convinced God will not visit us with revival. The call for a Great Commission Resurgence will not move heaven, and it will be scoffed at by the world for the sham that it is! “We will love you and welcome you if you look like us and act like us!” What kind of gospel madness is this?
- Starting at home we must pursue a vision for our churches that looks like heaven. Yes, we must go around the world to reach Asians and Europeans, the Africans and the South Americans. But we must also go across the street, down the road, and into every corner of our local mission field where God in grace has brought the nations here.
- This will demand little boys sitting down and men of God standing up. Reaching, for example, Muslim men, will require Christian men! This will demand a radical reorienting of lifestyles, priorities, commitments, and perspectives. Business as usual as a denomination and as individuals will not be an option if a real Great Commission Resurgence is to take place.
- We must take seriously each essential component of the Great Commission. Go...Disciple...Baptize...and Teach them to obey all that Christ has commanded.
- This means planting authentically Bible/Baptist churches and filling them with authentic followers of Jesus, irrespective of nationality, race, economic or social status. Genuine discipleship is not negotiable. We must train them and equip

them to reproduce and then move on to those fields yet to hear the name of Jesus, inviting them to join us in the glorious assignment our Lord has given to all of His disciples.

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.
 - Children are a burden not a blessing.
 - Less is best or at least less is better.
 - Result: have less children!
- We have been seduced with respect to the importance of motherhood.
 - It is an inferior calling.
 - It can be delegated, at least in part, to another.
- We have been seduced with respect to the role of dad.
 - He is a bumbling idiot.
 - He is not necessary, maybe not even needed.
- 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!
- Will you pray for God to call your children and grandchildren into vocational ministry? To go to the nations far away and to the hard places as an international missionary?! Will you get a Godward perspective for life, for marriage, for family?

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)

- Here we address what will probably be the most controversial and generate the most debate, discussion and even opposition. However, it is here that the most frustration is felt. 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.
- In addition, we have become bloated and bureaucratic. 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! If folks in the pew knew how much of their giving stayed in there state they would revolt and call for a revolution! Praise God I/we live in a state where our Convention leaders are trying to do something about this. Their tribe must increase! We waste too much time and too many resources and many are

fed up saying, “enough is enough!” The rally cry of the Conservative Resurgence was we will not give our monies to liberal institutions. Now the cry of the Great Commission Resurgence is we will not give our money to bloated bureaucracies.

- Thom Rainer has challenged us to do simple church. I want to challenge us to do simple Convention. Let’s streamline our structure, clarify our identity and maximize our resources. How? I put forth the following as food for thought in the days ahead. This list is by no means exhaustive. Ask:

- 1) Is there not a way to have annual meetings on the National and State levels that are attractive, inspiring and worth attending? I confess if I were not required to attend I am not sure I would go to our yearly meetings either! So much of what we do is unnecessary and will never allow us to build momentum for the Great Commission.
- 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?
- 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! Let others do what they can do. Let us focus on what only Christ has commissioned us to do. Prioritize and simplify.

Our mission will require aggressive and intentional cooperation in church planting. The churches we plant must be sound in their doctrine, contextual in their forms, and aggressive in their evangelistic and mission orientation. In order to make this work, we need renewed commitment from our churches, local associations, and state conventions. For local associations, this is an opportunity to demonstrate that they are still needed and that their existence matters. In days gone by, local associations provided local churches with mission resources and advice that are now being provided by other institutions, networks, and people. For state conventions, this provides an opportunity to return to their roots and stem the tide of churches that are bypassing (and many more that will) state conventions because they refuse to give money to what they consider to be bloated and inefficient bureaucracies with red tape a mile long.

- We need to kill and bury all sacred cows; we need to start talking publicly about what so many are whispering privately. Nothing less than a new vision and a new paradigm for effective and efficient cooperation will inspire a new generation to get on board and stay on board.

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)

- Today I sense a real hunger in a younger generation for strong Bible teaching and Christian theology. That is a wonderfully positive sign. With the waning of a cultural Christianity that cannot survey the attacks of a sophisticated and growing

secularism, only faithful teaching of the Bible will equip 21st century believers to stand strong as defenders of the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

- 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.
- Those who expound the Bible faithfully, theologically and practically will work the hardest, sweat the most, and wrestle with God and His word with the greatest time investment and intensity.
- Walt Kaiser is exactly right when he says, “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.” I am absolutely convinced there is a genetic connection between an impotent pulpit and an indifference concerning the Great Commission. Too many of our people know neither the content of Scripture nor the doctrines of Scripture. Preaching the cross of Christ, His bloody atonement, and the lostness of humanity is often absent. Some pulpiteers simply want to be cute or edgy. If the Bible is used at all, it is usually as a proof-text out of context with no real connection to what the biblical author is saying. Such men are guilty of ministerial malpractice on their congregation. Some topical preaching, narrative preaching, emerging preaching, and yes, even some types of doctrinal preaching, fundamentally suggest by their method and practice that the Holy Spirit should have packaged the Bible differently. This is spiritually ignorant at best and arrogant at worst. What our churches need is “expository preaching that is text driven and honors the truth of Scripture as it was given by the Holy Spirit.”

- Mark Dever well says, “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” (9 *Marks of a Healthy Church*, 39). Mark is absolutely right in my judgment.
- The faithful expositor will be humbled, even haunted, by the realization that when he stands to preach he stands to preach what has been given by the Holy Spirit of God. 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].”
- A faithful minister of the Word will bombard every text with questions that many preachers of the Holy Scripture never ask, questions that will inspire and equip a congregation to become competent systematic theologians.
 - 1) What does this text say about the Bible (and the doctrine of Revelation)?
 - 2) What does this text say about God (also Creation, angelology)?
 - 3) What does this text say about humanity (and sin, our fallenness)?
 - 4) What does this text say about Jesus Christ (His person and work)?
 - 5) What does this text say about the Holy Spirit?
 - 6) What does this text say about Salvation?
 - 7) What does this text say about the Church?
 - 8) What does this text say about Last Things?

- In particular, he will take note of what Jesus said in John 15:26, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father-the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father-He will testify about me,” and again John 16:14, where Jesus adds, “He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me.” Call it what you will, preaching that does not exalt, magnify and glorify the Lord Jesus is not Christian Preaching. 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 not 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.
 - 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. This alone will inspire and energize a younger generation because of the excitement entailed in a new work. Furthermore, and we must never forget, urban centers such as New York, Washington, DC, Boston, Los Angeles, and Seattle are 1) powerfully influential in national and international affairs and 2) almost completely bereft of evangelical influence.

- 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. God has gifted them and we must equip them for their service of ministry and missionary service in their community, school, workplace and places of recreation. Religious practices and traditions are not the same as missionary and gospel living. We must help our people recognize the difference. No one has addressed this better than Tim Keller, who in *“The Missional Church,”* [and if you don’t like the word “missional” then think “missionary”] writes,

“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.’”

<http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/missional.pdf>

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)

- There are essential and non-negotiable components of biblical worship and work. There is no specific biblical style or method ordained by our God. Look all you like. It is not there!
- What will unite Southern Baptist in the future will not be style, methodology and preference. Any past hegemony of methods and programs is gone, and it is not coming back. How we do things will be expansive and diverse. 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?” Waycross, Georgia will look different than Las Vegas, Nevada. Montgomery, Alabama will look different than Portland, Oregon. Boston will be different than Dallas. Memphis will have a different strategy than Miami. 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!

- 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)

- - Pride – 1) “I don't need the insights of godly, seasoned ministers.” 2) “Look at what the Southern Baptist convention is and has done!” God does not need the Southern Baptist Convention! We think more of ourselves than we ought.

- Arrogance – 1) “We know what is best because we have been there and done that. Younger brothers and sisters need to sit back and be quiet. When we need them we will let them know.”
- Jealousy – “I don’t want God to bless others and leave me/us out.”
- Hatred – Loathing others you should love.
- Contentions – Fighting over things that are not essential and acting as unchristian as the world.
- Lying – Purposefully misrepresenting others or not taking the time to accurately understand them.
- Selfish ambition – Wanting a place of leadership rather than earning a place of leadership. A love for running a church or denomination more than a love for serving it.
- Laziness – Not doing the hard work of ministry because it is costly.
- Complacency – Being satisfied with the status quo and being in denial that we are in a crisis moment that could be fatal.
- Idolatries – Putting anything or anyone in the place of Jesus and His agenda for His church.

Conclusion:

- I am convinced we can be better than this. I also am convinced that we can do more together than we could ever do apart. That is why I am in this to the end whenever or however it may come.

- However, we have to stop doing everything we do “for us!” We have, in many ways, become a selfish people. We must once more start doing what we do for others, beginning with Jesus.
- God is going to turn this world upside down. We can be a part of this if we are more passionate for His glory than our conveniences and comfort. God is going to turn this world upside down, and we can be a part of it if we humble ourselves and focus on loving each other and working with each other to seek and save the lost. Older believers need to acknowledge, “We need the energy and fresh ideas of a younger generation.” Younger believers need to realize, “We need the wisdom and experience of our parents and grandparents.” We really do need each other.
- Finally, we desperately need the heart of Jesus. We need the eyes of Jesus. If we can get to that, we will have what we need to move forward as a mighty Great Commission army going forth to do battle for the Captain of our Salvation and the Savior of Souls. If not, we will find ourselves on the sidelines playing silly and meaningless games while God’s mighty army moves on without us. Brothers and sisters, I have found the army I want to fight with. It’s called the church. I have found the Commander-in-Chief I want to serve. His name is Jesus. I have found the enemy I want to destroy. It is Satan, sin, death and hell. Will you join me? There is victory for the taking!