Identity Crisis #3 Pastor Rick Baker

*What is* ***essential*** *to the Local Church?* January 31 2021

### THE ESSENCE OF THE CHURCH\*

# A Biblical Representation of the Very Being of the Local Church

(\*Title and outline, Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches)

What are the elements that together, distinctively and intrinsically, make a church a church?

## God’s Organized, Purposeful, Assembly

* A people, an assembly, called out to be usable by God
  + God’s church organized His way (1 Cor. 14:33,40)

*But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. (40)*

* + An assembly (qahal, ekklesia, *bonded together [1 Cor. 12:26])*

*“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it;*

*if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.” (26)*

*“The very word church and every image for the church is*

*corporate, involving people being assembled together in face-to-face relationships.”* (Hammett, 69)

* For ministry (Acts 2:42-47)

*“We really need to see less of each other; friendship isn’t a vaccine.”*

(Hull University Teaching Hospitals, England; 2020 social engineering)

* Teaching
* Fellowship
* Worship
* Service
* Evangelism

**SO WHAT?** *How organized, purposeful, and assembled is CBC?*

* *Structured*
* *Together (bonded)*
* *Ministries in full*

## A Local, Living and Growing Assembly

* Christians are to **belong** and not be detached from the **local** church…

*“Those who accepted his (Peter) message were baptized and about three thousand were* ***added to their number*** *that day. (Acts 2:41; cf. 4:4)…put out of your fellowship (1 Cor. 5:2)…to judge those outside the church…are you not to judge those inside? (1 Cor. 5:12)*

* Churches are to **grow** and do so through change
  + Is the change legitimate?—Attention to Scripture and not accommodation to culture
  + Spiritual growth, not human marketing fuels numerical growth

*“God who makes things grow” (1 Cor. 3:7)*

*Growth, spiritual and numerical comes from the church functioning obediently (Eph. 4:15)*

**SO WHAT?** *How formally connected, alive and growing is CBC?*

* *Believers are actively engaged members*
* *Growing spiritually to grow numerically*

**A Gospel Assembly**

*“The gospel is prior to the church and the church exists because of it…*

*if the church ever loses the gospel, it ceases to be a church…*

*the gospel is essential to its being.”* (Hammett,73)

“*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God*

*unto salvation to them that believe…”* (Rom. 1:16)

*“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse!* (Gal. 1:8-9)

“*If a church errs on the gospel, they have become, not just imperfect, but invalid; they are no longer a church.”* (Hammett, 74)

**SO WHAT?** *How gospel is CBC?*

* *Teaching consistently scripturally-sourced*
* *Prioritize the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ alone*

**A Spirit-Empowered Assembly**

* Spirit and Church intrinsically connected—*church never mentioned in Acts until Pentecost.*

*“…you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”* (Eph. 2:22)

* The empowering Agent in Pentecostalism

*“’Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.”* (Zech 4:6)

**SO WHAT?** *How Spirit-empowered and dependent is CBC?*

* Prioritize prayer
* Prioritize obedience to Scripture

The essence of the **Essential** church then, **is a God-organized, purposeful, local, living, growing, gospel-centred, and Spirit-empowered assembly.** (Hammett)

How about you? So, what needs to change in your life to live the very essence of Christianity?

* *Finding your place chosen for you by God*
* *Tightly connected to your church family*
* *Actively engaged as a member of your local church*
* *Growing spiritually and growing the church numerically*
* *Prioritize talking up the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ alone*
* *Prioritize prayer*
* *Prioritize obedience to Scripture*