

The Builder



First Baptist Church of Gastonia

Volume XIII Number 16

Week of April 21, 2024

A Red- Letter Sunday - April 7, 2024 Let's Celebrate

Every church has its own culture; some are staid and formal, while others adopt a more relaxed, informal atmosphere. Similarly, every pastor brings a distinct style to their ministry. Take, for example, my friend Mark Maulding of Grace Life International, whose approach resembles that of a lecturer. Then there's my dear friend and colleague Dr. Benjamin Hinton of Tabernacle Baptist Church, who has shepherded his congregation for over twenty-five years with academic excellence, incorporating well-timed call-and-response techniques into his sermons.

As for me, I love to weave appropriate stories into my preaching. During April 7's sermon something extraordinary happened right in the middle of our service—did you notice? I was thrilled, but I tried to keep my excitement from overshadowing the sermon.

For the first time since I began my tenure as your pastor, you did something I've always hoped for—something quite out of character for our typical worship services. Allow me to share: several times during the sermon, I presented opportunities for you to actively participate, either by completing a well-known scripture verse or by asking questions related to the theme of Joseph and his remarkable journey of forgiveness.

This Sunday, for the first time, nearly everyone in the sanctuary joined in hearty responses to my inquiries. While it might seem like a small victory, it was incredibly encouraging to see you so alert and engaged, spontaneously participating in the sermon.

Thank you for being who you are and for trusting God as we move forward together. Your engagement is a true testament to the vibrant spirit of God in First Baptist Church.

Now.... Let's Let the Church Say, Amen!

*KeEp DaNciN'
Pastor Dwayne*

First Baptist Church, Gastonia North Carolina

First Baptist Church 704-865-8576

A place to belong, a place to become, a place to bear witness

2650 Union Road Fax: 704-865-8579

Gastonia NC 28054 -Mailing: PO Box 6298, Gastonia NC 28054-6018

CALENDER OF EVENTS

Wednesday, April 17

12:00 Noon Bible Study/Johnathan Bryson
Chapel Class/Bring a bag lunch if you so desire

5:15 pm Family First Feast

Menu: Baked Potato/Salad Bar/Trimmings/Dessert/Drinks

7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, April 21

9:45 am Sunday School

11:00 am Worship/Dwayne Burks

5:00 pm The Chosen – Season 4

Wednesday, April 24

12:00 Noon Bible Study in the Chapel/Johnathan Bryson

5:15 pm Family First Feast

Menu: Cold Plate: Chicken Salad/Tuna Salad/Macaroni Salad/Dessert/Drinks

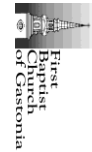
7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, April 28

9:45 am Sunday School

11:00 am Worship/Dwayne Burks

5:00 pm The Chosen – Season 4



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Worship Greeters

April:
Amy Avery
Art Queen

Welcome

HAPPY
BIRTHDAY

April 21 - 30

23 – Bob Carter

24 – Ann Webb

28 – Karen Conway

29 – Ray Biggerstaff

WEDNESDAY NOON BIBLE STUDY

Rev. Johnathan Bryson

Study Topic: Patience

April 17th: Romans 8:25

April 24th: James 1:2-4

Sunday School literature for
May – August will be available
on the table in the Narthex.

COMING
SOON

A STUDY OF
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
— SUMMER 2024 —

MEMORIALS

In Memory of:

Louise Carlton

By: Magnolia Grove

Townhomes – Hickory NC

Martha Spurrier

In Memory of:

Thelma Coleman

By: Martha Spurrier

In Memory of:

Dr. Charles Lowery

By: Martha Spurrier



How You Can Help Visitors Feel Welcome at FBCG

Greet newcomers warmly and introduce yourself. Ask genuine, open-ended questions to engage with them:

- "What brought you to visit us today?"
- "Which part of town do you live in?"
- "Do you know anyone else here at First Baptist?"

Consider introducing them to another member of our church family and, if appropriate, ask if you can sit with them during the service. These sincere gestures can make newcomers feel welcomed and valued.

Supporting Your Pastoral Staff And Congregational Care Teams

When you learn a visitor's name, take a moment to jot it down and pass it along to one of our pastors. You can also call Alice or send a text message with the visitor's name to Pastors Dwayne or Jonathan.

This helps us ensure that every visitor receives a personal follow-up and feels truly connected and welcomed to FBCG.

Schedule Mix-Up Pays Off

Last Monday, I arrived bright and early at 8:00 AM sharp for my routine dental appointment. Upon entering, I noticed the office was just being opened; the lights weren't even fully turned on yet. It turned out I had mistakenly shown up 30 minutes early. The receptionist suggested I run an errand or something, as the dental hygienists wouldn't arrive until 8:30. So, I went to get the coffee I had skipped that morning so I would be "on time."

This is where the story takes an interesting turn. The closest place for a quick coffee was a McDonald's location I seldom visit. When I approached the counter I recognized the young man behind the counter as someone who had visited our church the previous day. I was thrilled because I had only learned his first name but not his last in Subday. So there was no way we could follow up with him. Lo and behold, there he was—live and in person. We immediately recognized one another.

It was truly a delight to visit his restaurant a second time this week and learn more about him, his lovely wife, and their soon-to-be-born first daughter. I'm so happy I messed up my schedule and was able to make a new friend.

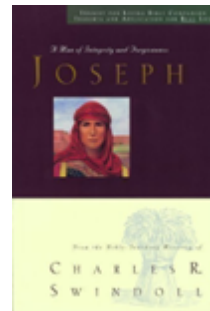
KeEp DaNciN', Pastor Dwayne

Readers' Corner

As we continue into week 3 of our Sunday morning series on *Joseph's Unbelievable Forgiveness* here are some resources to enhance your study.



Genesis 37-50 are the chapters in the Bible where you will find a narrative of Joseph's life.



Joseph: A Man of Integrity and Forgiveness by Charles Swindoll - This enlightening and easily readable book from 1998 that is still available on Amazon as well as Gaston County Library via catalog call number 268.4 SWI.



The Red Tent by Anita Diamant - This work of historical fiction is set in the same timeframe as Joseph's life. It provides a spell binding perspective on the nomadic culture of that ancient era. It is available on Amazon and our Gaston County Library has it in print, DVD, and audio formats.

**KeEp DaNciN' (And Reading!)
Pastor Dwayne**

Special thanks to DeDe Gerhart for permitting us to share her powerful comments and Invocation Prayer from April 14, 2024

As we were having lunch on Easter Sunday, enjoying the wonderful food on the table, I was reminded of the story about the difference between Heaven and Hell. The story goes that someone in Hell was explaining to an Angel what Hell is like. The person explained that there is an abundance of food in Hell that looks so wonderful. Anything you can imagine is there for the taking, but they cannot eat any of it. The Angel asks why, and the person explains that their spoons are 3 feet long, and their elbows do not bend, so they cannot get the food into their mouths. They are all hungry, and everyone is frustrated and angry. The Angel explained that it is exactly the same in Heaven. They have all the food anyone can dream of to eat; their spoons are also 3 feet long, and their elbows do not bend, but they are able to eat everything and enjoy one another's company. The person from Hell asks how that is possible, and the Angel explains, "In Heaven, we feed one another."

This past week, I was reflecting on Dwayne's sermon on forgiveness last Sunday and thinking about the polarized world we live in. Some days I can't help but wonder what is going to become of our country? Are we going to end up as refugees somewhere, sometime in the future? There seem to be so many people, many of whom claim to be devout Christians, whose divisiveness and hatred and anger seem to be threatening our way of life. I have found that some of these people are actually my friends and extended relatives, and I wonder, "How is it possible that I can be friends and acquaintances with so many people whose opinions and beliefs are so different from my own?" But what is the alternative?

I was thinking about forgiveness in this context. Now you are probably thinking, "What does that have to do with forgiveness?" I think forgiveness is not something you need to extend only when someone has wronged you or caused you harm in some way. Sometimes, you need to extend forgiveness and acceptance to those around you who do not share your beliefs and values. Because lack of forgiveness can create anger and hostility in yourself, which can create the same divisiveness that you blame the other person for. I do not know about you, but I find it is easier to overlook things and forgive friends and relatives for having beliefs I feel are misguided, because I have a relationship with them. I find it is more difficult to forgive and accept a stranger or someone I do not have a close relationship with for being "part of the problem."

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All of these thoughts brought me back to the story about Heaven and Hell. I've been wondering, if I am sitting around the table with a 3 foot long spoon and the person sitting across from me is someone who has wronged me in some way or perhaps hasn't wronged me but is someone who is outspoken, whose beliefs are so different from my own, would I feed them? Would you? Dear Heavenly Father, We come before You today, joined by Christians throughout the country and across the world, to worship You and praise You. We thank You for the incredible sacrifice You made on the cross at Calvary. We thank You for Your grace and unfailing love.

We pray that You will open our hearts to the message today. Help us to keep the commandments You have given us by teaching us to love one another as ourselves - as You love us.

Help us to see the world around us, with all its flaws and imperfections, and find a way to express love and kindness to those around us, regardless of their viewpoints and their actions. Help us to learn to accept and forgive those whose beliefs we find offensive.

Fill our hearts with joy so that Your light will shine upon all those we meet in the week ahead. For we know only Your light can unite us. Help us to remember that if we cannot forgive others, we break the bridge we also must cross, because each of us has a need to be forgiven.

I ask this in Your name, that Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen.