

# GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 38, **No.35, August 28**, 2012 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

## TWELVE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD CHURCH!

At Southside, we should be committed to be and to be becoming a good church! We will never arrive! We will always be in process. WITH OUR EYES ON JESUS, we will go forward. If ever we put our eyes on man — any man — we will fragment!

**[Note: The following is actually a letter we often mail to professing Christians who visit in our worship services. Please read this carefully and prayerfully! As we are attentive to the truth of God's Word, we will be built up in the faith!]**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

**We were blessed to have you worship with us at Southside!** You will be prayed for by Southsiders! **As you and your family seek to discern God's will as to a church home— please understand that 'the process' can be filled with spiritual land-mines! Therefore, please consider the following:**

**Reality:** When many folk get married, when many churches call a new pastor and when many folk visit and then move their church membership to a new congregation — in all three of these most critical decisions, **FAR TOO MANY people, pastors and/or congregations wake up a few days or a few months later totally surprised!**

They find out, a little late, that they have entered into covenant relationship with STRANGERS who are quite different from first impressions! Unhappiness, conflict and/or divorce are all too often in the wind!

**Many times a root problem is the process!** Often we fail when making these critical decisions because we did not truly walk in the light with one another. Normally, no one is intentionally lying! We just did not bother to tell the whole truth about who we really are, where we have been, what scars in our lives are still fresh, what we truly believe, etc.

**I have vivid memories of 30+ years ago when** I could not make the following statement; but for many years now, **I am truly blessed:** I am not measured by the number of ‘nickels and noses’ I can attract, but by whether or not I am truly seeking to model Christ and staying true to His Word! Therefore, I can prayerfully and freely approach those who visit and/or inquire about Southside Church **with such questions as,**

- (1) Are we a basic theological/doctrinal match?
- (2) How can we serve this family whether they join us or not?
- (3) What are their wounds, if any, and how can we help bring healing? (I have even counseled folk to first return to their church family and ‘make things right’... before considering any move to a different congregation!)
- (4) Are these fine folk really Christians or are they confused about genuine Christianity?
- (5) Are we a basic match when it comes to philosophy of ministry and Church practices?

**Here is more reality in the twenty first century:**

- (1) Many** who are visiting churches are hurting from conflict in previous churches.
- (2) Others** have just moved into the Gallatin area and are simply seeking a new church home.
- (3) Others** simply have release by the Holy Spirit to seek a fresh place of ministry.
- (4) Others** have found that their current Church has moved away from core essentials of the ‘faith and practice’ of their former days and so they seek a loving fellowship that is grounded in the Word of God.
- (5) And, sadly,** there are many who are looking for a church based on 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and not one based on 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 4:4! (Do yourself a favor— look up and read these verses!)

God blesses when we walk in the light one with another! SO PLEASE VIEW THIS LETTER AS AN INVITATION TO GAIN some basic knowledge about SOUTHSIDE BAPTIST! **AND PLEASE SEE THIS LETTER AS AN INVITATION FOR YOU TO WALK IN THE LIGHT WITH US!** Moreover, if God does not lead you to further explore fellowship

with the saints at Southside— please meditate upon the following information anyway! WHY? Because if this letter ‘squares’ with the Word of God, then we all have to ‘get in line with’ the Holy Spirit’s revelation regardless of the congregation to which we are or will be joined!

---

## **AT SOUTHSIDE, WE ARE REJOICING IN AND SEEKING TO BE A GOOD CHURCH!**

**God’s plan for every Christian** is to be a functioning member of a local body of believers. Here are TWELVE important characteristics **which we believe should be considered** when seeking the right church home and/or as a church seeks to go forward in the faith:

**I. A HIGH VIEW OF GOD:** Jeremiah 9:23-24 states that the greatest quest in life worth boasting about is the quest of knowing God. A good church will help you grow in Biblical knowledge as to the nature of the True and Living God; and in fellowship with HIM!

**II. WORSHIP and PRAISE:** The congregation's highest priority and privilege is worship. Psalm 2:11 declares, *"...Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling."* The modern trend today finds churches seeking to please people in whatever style of music they like. People are diverse. Many churches seek whatever music is popular or desired by people.

**However, true Christian Worship is God-centered, not man-centered.** God is worthy that we should Praise Him! Worship and praise to God surely must be from the heart! At Southside, there is a variety of expressions in music. God is leading us in godly, genuine Worship and Praise that is GOD-GLORIFYING and not MAN-CENTERED; and that is neither DEAD nor a fleshly show of CARNALITY!

**III. THE FAMILY:** Our modern society has unleashed an unprecedented onslaught against the family. **To make the family a priority is** to teach husbands to love (Eph. 5:25) AND lay down their lives (Phil. 2:5-8) for their wives; wives to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22); and children to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1); and parents, especially Dads, to train their children in the ways of the LORD (Eph. 6:4). **We seek** to build up families! **We also seek** to provide a haven for single parents by surrounding them with godly families.

**In addition, we seek** to empower parents through Sunday School classes, Children’s Church, K-12 Christian School, Music opportunities, Parenting resources, Children’s/Youth Camp, Outings, etc. **[Starting in September, there will be SUNDAY EVENING Family Integrated Home Fellowships! STAY TUNED! INQUIRE!]**

**FYI:** We provide a “Children’s Church” for a portion of the Sunday Morning worship; and we also welcome families who simply desire to participate in worship as a family unit.

**IV. DISCIPLESHIP:** The church must be equipping men and women for ministry. The mission of the church is clear, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”* (Matt. 28:19) The call is not to merely ‘count nickels and noses’ so as to get the praise of men for having a crowd present.

Moreover, discipleship in a body of believers is not the exclusive responsibility of pastors. **Indeed, the primary privilege of Christian Discipleship lies with the assembly of saints, with pastors being as player/coaches:** (Meditate upon **Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:13-26**) Christian Fellowship and Discipleship takes place ONE ON ONE and/or in Sunday School Classes, Ladies Bible Studies, Saturday Men’s meetings, Mission trips, etc.

**Reality:** You may never teach a class or sing in a choir or be an ordained deacon, etc. — However, it is the will of God for every Christian to be experiencing life changing and eternity impacting ministry like that spoken of in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12!

**V. EVANGELISM:** A church obedient to Christ will have a solid emphasis upon sharing the Gospel, beginning in its own community and extending to the uttermost parts of the earth. Our Lord Jesus charged His disciples just prior to His ascension with these words, *“...and you shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth.”* (Acts 1:11) ***Witness: One whose life gives evidence of JESUS!***

At Southside, **God continues to call us to embrace purity and love so as not to dishonor Jesus Christ and cancel the Gospel message we proclaim!** In our Outreach efforts we seek to minister to people from various backgrounds and walks of life; **and to be much involved in MISSIONS to the ends of the earth!** The wonderful gospel of Christ will meet anyone right where they/we are in our lives and then empower us into paths of Christ-likeness!

**VI. A SERVANT’S ATMOSPHERE:** Where the Word of God is taught and saints are growing there will be people serving. A good church emphasizes **everyone’s responsibility for involvement and mutual ‘one-to-another’ ministry.**

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many.”* (Mark 10:45).

*“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh; but through love serve one another.”* (Gal. 5:13)

**VII. PREACHING & TEACHING:** Biblical preaching is not to be geared toward amusing the audience; nor geared toward flesh enticing fads that come down the pike in our entertainment oriented age.

**Biblical preaching will** TEACH the faith; CORRECT error; RESET the direction of our lives; and TRAIN us in righteous living. Preaching and teaching that is true to God's Word will equip us for every good work and supply all genuine needs! (2 Tim. 3:16-17) Paul charged Pastor Timothy, *"Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."* (I Timothy 4:2)

We live in an intense spiritual war zone. **And yet, shockingly, masses of people today seek churches who will 'tickle their ears'**. They have little or no interest in sound Biblical doctrine. They want to keep their sin and be promised heaven. They love fables and stories and religious entertainment. **IF YOU LOVE THE PURE WORD OF GOD, you will likely feel at home at Southside!**

**VIII. A CLEAR & CONCISE GOSPEL MESSAGE:** The Gospel is the good news of Christ's death for sinners, His burial and resurrection, all according to the Scriptures. Please carefully read I Corinthians 15:1-4 where this Gospel is clearly presented. A good church will continually be refuting the idea that men and woman can obtain Heaven through human merit of any kind. **Ephesians 2:8-9 states**, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."*

**MOREOVER**, a good church will also be bold to proclaim Ephesians 2:10! FOR TRUE Salvation is GOD'S WORKMANSHIP! TRUE SALVATION RESULTS IN A CHANGED LIFE THAT HAS GOOD WORKS AS LIVING PROOF OF SAVING FAITH! In other words, a good church will constantly convey that salvation is: **By GRACE alone Through FAITH alone because of CHRIST alone and unto the fruit of good works!**

**IX. A COMMITMENT TO THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES:** A high view of the Bible is demonstrated in a good church when preaching and teaching is done under the presupposition that God has given to us a Bible with answers for life's questions and problems. This truth is the intent of the Holy Spirit's statement in II Peter 1:3, where we are clearly told that God has *"Granted to us everything pertaining to life and Godliness."*

Attentiveness to the Word of God is a heart decision and choice! **The attractiveness of Jesus and His Word comes by the blessed ministry of the Holy Spirit**, not by a carnal Hollywood movie clip in a sermon.

**X. A WILLINGNESS TO IMPLEMENT FORGIVENESS:** Forgiveness is both a great virtue and the key to genuine unity in the church. When we love and forgive each other we tear down the barriers that are built up through sin.

As Christians we are to "*Forgive each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*" (Eph. 4:12). Based upon the fact that we have received the forgiveness of God in Christ, we are to offer forgiveness to others.

**XI. A WILLINGNESS TO IMPLEMENT CHURCH DISCIPLINE:** Many churches preach against sin but do absolutely nothing about it. We cannot have a church wherein the proclamation of holiness is made and sin is denounced, but nothing is ever done to enforce those things. The name of Christ will be honored and the purity of the church will be maintained only when the members of the church are willing to obey God in their commitment to lovingly and in humility of heart, confront one another.

*"And if your brother sins, Go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."* (Matt. 18:15)

*"Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted."* (Gal. 6:1)

**XII. A GOOD CHURCH MUST BE COMMITTED TO A LIFE OF PRAYER:** Since only God can do the work of God, then we must pray. **Private, individual prayer and Church-wide prayer must be a priority!**

(The above points are not exhaustive... but certainly foundational!)

At Southside, we are committed to be and to be becoming a good church! We will never arrive! We will always be in process. WITH OUR EYES ON JESUS, we will continue to go forward. If ever we put our eyes on man... any man... we will fragment.

\_\_\_\_\_, I would love to sit down with you and JUST EXPLORE! **I am greatly interested to know** about your church experiences, what you see and feel, what you desire, how you believe you are equipped to serve or how you would like to serve in the Body of Christ to which God leads you, etc.

I would also like very much to know your questions about Southside, etc. **When it is all said and done** you may or may not be called to Southside. That's OK. **But could we just prayerfully explore?**

Southside Baptist Church, 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN / (615) 452-5951

Grace to you! / Pastor James Bell (Cell: 476-7666)

[www.southsidegallatin.org](http://www.southsidegallatin.org)

---

## **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!**

**1. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM!**

2. **YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm** @ Adam and Bethany's home.
2. **Thursdays @ 6:30pm:** OUTREACH VISITATION
3. **EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: Men's** Fellowship and Bible Study

## **Sunday Schedule for September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30**

1. **9:30am-** Sunday School— we are back in regular Sunday School Classes
2. **10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. **Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal**
4. **1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service**

---

**NOTE: THE SEPTEMBER 9 Early Afternoon service, (1PM)**— We spent at least 6 weeks in 'special Sunday School lessons'... focused on Worship, Ministry to one another, and Evangelistic/Mission Outreach. **Now what?!!!** TO WHAT FORWARD STEPS OF APPLICATION is Jesus Christ the Head of the Body calling us?

**NOTE: This fall we will not be having AWANA on Wednesday nights. INSTEAD, we will seek to accomplish some of AWANA's goals and other goals in a different way on SUNDAY EVENINGS! THUS,**

**September 9 at 5-7 pm will mark the first FAMILY INTEGRATED HOME FELLOWSHIP!** Families will meet together, age integrated. MORE INFO IN OUR SEPTEMBER 2, SUNDAY BULLETIN.

### **NOTE: LORD'S SUPPER, SEPTEMBER 16 @ 1:00PM**

**NOTE: This Sunday, September 2,** we plan to RETURN to our studies in the Epistle to the Romans. Several weeks back, we left off at the beginning of Romans 12. **You are encouraged to read ROMANS 12 in preparation for worship this Sunday!**

---

**Ladies Bible Study**— plan to resume within just a few weeks for a Fall Series.

---

**SCS!** Because we TEST every enrolling student and PLACE them where they are actually performing— anytime is a good time to enroll!

### **Unique Factors at Southside Christian School**

**At Southside Christian School** a student can move ahead faster or go slower if that is the best rate for him. **He is not locked into a class schedule that goes if he has not learned; nor does he have to wait if he is able to advance ahead of his peers.** **At Southside Christian School** students experience social interaction through chapel, speech classes, art, field trips, Physical Education, music activities and competition at the Regional and International Student Convention.

**At Southside Christian School**, academic excellence is reality. **Students must score 80%** or above to pass any and all subjects. No one is socially promoted. The classroom requires hard work, responsibility, and discipline. The atmosphere is one of genuine love. Christian training and memorization of Scripture are built into the curriculum.

**Students entering SCS for the first time** are diagnostically tested and placed in class-work where they are actually performing— thus, existing ‘learning gaps’ are discovered and remedied. A student can enter SCS at any time, begin work and go forward without having been left behind. Please VIEW the video! Then call us: 615-452-5951

**<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>**