

5 Non-Negotiables for the Church

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What 5 non-negotiable truths should be at the foundation of every church? Join Pastor Steve as he reveals this from God's Word.

INTRODUCTION

- Today is our 76th anniversary as a church
- In light of this, I want to take a pause in our study of Mark to share with you 5 non-negotiables for the church
- But before I do that, I need to talk about what I mean by non-negotiables
- When we talk about something that is non-negotiable, we mean it is unchangeable, permanent, fixed, unalterable...
- For example, we say the deity of Jesus is non-negotiable
- In [Isaiah 9:6](#), Jesus is called the “Mighty God”
- In [1 John 5:20](#), He is called “the true God and eternal life”
- Statements like these abound and they are non-negotiable
- They are not subject to change or can be changed

- This is a truth that the Bible teaches whether you acknowledge it or not
- The same is true of His resurrection
- The Bible presents this too as an absolute truth that is non-negotiable
- Jesus said in [John 10:17-18](#), “17 “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 “No one takes it away from Me, but from Myself, I lay it down. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.””
- Salvation would be another non-negotiable truth
- It’s fixed, it’s eternal, it’s unchangeable, it’s forever
- Jesus said in [John 10:27-28](#), “27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”
- So as we look at what is non-negotiable I want to look at the church
- In our 76 year history, we need to ask is this what our church has been and still committed to
- I trust if it wasn’t it is now because these 5 non-negotiable truths must be at the foundation of every church
- So let’s see what they are

· The first is...

I. A High View of God

“It is absolutely essential that a church perceive itself as an institution for the glory of God” (MacArthur, 13).

· That means...

A. God Must Be Glorified in All that We Do

1. In the little things of our life as well as the big

- Paul said in [1 Corinthians 10:31](#), “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
- R.A. Torrey says, “The apostle concludes the subject by giving them a general rule, sufficient to regulate every man’s conscience and practice,—that whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, to do it all with a habitual aim to the glory of God; by considering His precepts, and the propriety, expediency, appearance, and tendency of their actions” (The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge).

2. What is your habitual aim?

- Is it “the glory of God?”
- Do you consider “His precepts?”

- Do you consider “the propriety, expediency, appearance, and tendency of [your] actions?”

3. In everything we do we are to “glorify God in [our] body and in [our] spirit, which are God’s,” 1 Corinthians 6:20 says.

• Here are some ways we can do that...

- When we “offer praise” that glorifies God
- Psalm 50:23, “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.”
- Hebrews 13:15, “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess His name.”
- This is continual praise to God!
- It’s coming from our “lips” as we “confess His name”
- This is what we have been created for
- Isaiah 43:21, “The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.”

• Another way that we glorify God is...

- When we trust God that glorifies Him
- Romans 4:20 says that Abraham “did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.”

- When God told Abraham that he was going to number his seed as the sand, he believed God even though his wife Sarah was barren
- This is trusting God even in the impossible
- The same is true for us, especially when we pray
- Some have said that Jacob prayed for 20 years for Rachel to have a child
- The Midrash (collection of Jewish stories, etc) said it was “14 years”
- Either way, he trusted God with her infertility

• We also glorify God...

- When we confess Christ that glorifies God
- Paul said in [Philippians 2:11](#) that “every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
- This is true whether you’re a follower of Jesus or not
- Confessing Christ is agreeing with God to the identity of His Son
- He is Lord!
- And “Every tongue will confess” that truth “to the glory of God the Father”

• Praise, trust, confession of Christ. Another way we glorify God is when we...

- When we bear fruit that glorifies God

- Jesus said in [John 15:8](#), “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”
- This is the evidence that we are His disciples
- It is also included in our calling
- Jesus said in [John 15:16](#), “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would abide, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

Some other ways that we glorify God is...

- When we use our spiritual gifts that glorifies God
- Peter said it this way in [1 Peter 4:11](#), “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”
- When we suffer for Christ that glorifies God
- [1 Peter 4:14](#) says, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.”
- Finally, when we physically die for Him that glorifies God
- Jesus told Peter in [John 21:18-19](#), “Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you

do not wish." 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

- So God must be glorified in all we do if we're going to be an institution for the glory of God...
- This also means...

B. God Must Be Taken Seriously

1. There must be a “fear of the Lord”

- [Psalm 34:11-14](#) says, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. 12 Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.”
- That’s how we show our fear or reverence for God
- It’s by keeping your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit, departing from evil and doing good and seeking and pursuing peace
- Prover 8:13 says, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.”
- [Proverbs 16:6](#) says, “...by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.”
- [Proverbs 23:17](#) says, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day.”

2. To have the fear of the Lord is to see God as He is revealed in His Word

- He is holy - [Isaiah 6:3](#)
- He is righteous - [Psalm 5:4](#) - “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You.”
- James says in 1:13 that He is “untemptable by evil.”
- “We must take God seriously, and exalt Him; we don’t want to have a man-centered church, we are to reach out to everyone in the love of Christ, but God is to be the focus of our worship and our life. Therefore, we shouldn’t look at the Bible as a book full of formulas for solving problems; it is a book that reveals God” (MacArthur, 11).

· The fear of God helps us do this and it helps us to...

C. We Must Move from a Man-Centeredness to a God-Centeredness

- If we fail to fear God then we are nothing more than centered on ourselves rather than on God!
- To move then from being man-centered...

1. To do this we must *think* biblically

- [Romans 12:1-2](#), “1 Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be

transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

- The Greek word for “transformed” is metamorphoo (pres.pass.ind.) from where we get the English word metamorphis
- That “connotes a change in outward appearance. Matthew uses the same word to describe the Transfiguration ([Matt. 17:2](#)). Just as Christ briefly and in a limited way displayed outwardly His inner, divine nature and glory at the Transfiguration, Christians should outwardly manifest their inner, redeemed natures, not once, however, but daily (cf. [2 Cor. 3:18](#); [Eph. 5:18](#))” (MacArthur)
- You do that by “renewing your mind”
- “That kind of transformation can occur only as the Holy Spirit changes our thinking through consistent study and meditation of Scripture ([Ps. 119:11](#); cf. [Col. 1:28](#); [3:10](#), [16](#); [Phil. 4:8](#)). The renewed mind is one saturated with and controlled by the Word of God.” (MacArthur)

· So...

2. When you *think* biblically you will then *talk* biblically

- [Colossians 4:6](#) says, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

3. When you *think* and *talk* biblically, you will *act* biblically

- You will do as [Romans 13:12-14](#) says. You will “cast off the works of darkness, and...put on the armor of light.”
- You will “walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.”
- You will “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”
- The idea of “provision for the flesh” means to “provide for” (Friberg), to give “care” and “attention” (UBS), to give “forethought” (Robertson) or “planning ahead” (MacArthur).
- John MacArthur says, “Most sinful behavior results from wrong ideas and lustful desires we allow to linger in our minds.”
- J. Vernon McGee concludes by saying, “Oh, how many believers are making every provision for the flesh but are making no provision to go into His presence.”
- So to have a *high view of God* then God must be glorified in all that we do. He must be taken seriously, and we must move from a man-centeredness to a God-centeredness...
- The second nonnegotiable truth that we are to build our lives on is...

II. The Absolute Authority of Scripture

A. God's Word is Undermined

1. We see that by hearing the things that are taught today in the church

- The church is being told by prominent evangelical leaders that the word *day* in Genesis chapter one really refers to millions of years instead of a literal 24 hour day. So Christians are buying into evolution
- The church is also being taught that the doctrine of election means that God looks down through the corridors of time and sees whose going to choose Him and on that basis He chooses them
- Now we're hearing things in the church like *the openness of God*, *the new perspective on Paul*, and *the emerging church*
- Paul told Titus that the men he was to “appoint” as elders were to be those who hold “fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” ([Tit.1:9](#)).

2. The church is not only undermined by these things but also by those who come along with their visions, revelations, and people saying “God said to me.”

B. God's Word Must Be Upheld

1. It must be your highest priority

- [Matthew 4:4](#), “But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’””

2. It must be seen as the only means for growth in your life

- [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- Peter said in [1 Peter 2:2](#), “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”
- The puritan Joseph Alleine, who lived from 1634-1668 was an English non-conformist Puritan preacher. He said, “O ye saints, how you should love the Word, for by this you have been converted...Tie it about your neck, write it upon your hand, lay it in your bosom. When you go let it lead you, when you sleep let it keep you, when you wake let it talk with you. You that are unconverted, read the Word with diligence; flock to where it is powerfully preached. Pray for the coming of the Spirit in the Word. Come from your knees to the sermon, and come from the sermon to your knees. (The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations).

· A high view of God, the absolute authority of Scripture. Notice a third nonnegotiable...

III. Sound Doctrine

- “If you have a high view of God and are committed to Him, then you must go along with what His Word teaches. The teachings of God’s Word make up sound doctrine” (MacArthur, 13).
- The word “sound” (hugiaino) means, “healthy” (Strong).
- “Paul uses this word 9 times in the pastoral epistles (5 times in Titus), always in the sense that the truth produces spiritual well-being” (MacArthur Study Bible).
- The word “doctrine” (didaskalia) means, “teaching” (Strong).

A. We Must Teach Truths that People Can Hold On To

- “Very few explain the truths about God, life, death, heaven, hell, man, sin, Christ, angels, the Holy Spirit, the position of the believer, the flesh, or the world” (MacArthur, 13).

1. But we must teach these truths or what we’re teaching is not *sound* or healthy

2. People think that the teaching of hell does not promote spiritual well-being. If that is true then why did Paul call for a spiritual examination in [2 Corinthians 13:5?](#)

- “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified.”
- The doctrine of hell causes you to examine yourself so that you’re not self-deceived!

3. Paul told Timothy to “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” in [Titus 2:1](#).

- Then in verses 2-10 he talks about 5 groups in the church and what they are to commit themselves to.
- The older men are to “be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

4. Paul told Timothy essentially the same thing when he said in [2 Timothy 1:13](#) to “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

· So we must teach truths that people can hold on to and we...

B. You Must Commit Yourself to Go Beyond the Superficial in Your Study of God’s Word

1. You must be diligent to accurately interpret it

- [2 Timothy 2:15](#), “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”
- The church today does not study or accurately handle the Word. They listen to whatever is blowing in the wind and adopt that as their interpretation of God’s Word.

2. Paul told Timothy to devote himself to three things in [1 Timothy 4:13](#):

- He said, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”
- The phrase “give attention” (prosecho) means to “pay attention. As a nautical term, it means to hold a ship in a direction, to sail

towards. It means to hold one's course toward a place" (Zodhiates). In other words, it is to "pay attention to, give heed to, follow" (BAGD).

- What is he to "pay attention to" or "give heed to?"
- "Reading" (anagnosis) refers to "the act of reading" (Strong), i.e., "the public reading of the Scriptures (Zodhiates).
- "Exhortation" (paraklesis), refers "to the act of exhortation, encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in faith" (Zodhiates).
- "Doctrine" (didaskalia), "teaching" (Strong)
- If we commit ourselves to these three things then we will have gone beyond the superficial.

• The fourth nonnegotiable is...

IV. Personal Holiness

- There is a goal in mind here. It is that you be holy.

A. You Are Called to Live a Pure Life

1. Peter reminds us of this in [1 Peter 1:14-16](#)

- [1 Peter 1:14-16](#), "14 As obedient children, not being conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your conduct; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

- The word “Holy” (hagios) means “morally blameless” (Strong). In this context—free from sin, referring to moral behavior.

2. Paul speaks of this in [1 Thessalonians 4:1-7](#) in showing us how we are to handle our bodies

“1 Finally then, brothers, we ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God did not call us to impurity, but in sanctification.”

• **That means...**

B. You Need to Be Careful What You Expose Yourself to

- “It’s impossible to watch some of the films in the theaters and to read trash without paying a price” (MacArthur, 13).

1. Paul says in [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

- The phrase “let us cleanse ourselves” in that verse indicates by “the form of the verb...that this is something each Christian must do in his own life” (MacArthur Study Bible).

2. The apostle John says it this way in [1 John 3:3](#)

- “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”
- The word “pure” (hagnizo) means “to make clean, to sanctify, make holy” (Strong).

· That means...

C. We Should Enforce a Standard of Holiness Among Ourselves

- Paul says in [Ephesians 5:3-4](#), “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”
- In [Colossians 3:5](#) he says we are to “put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”
- Jesus helps us in this by providing the process for others to help us
- He says in [Matthew 18:15-17](#), “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if

he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

- A high view of God, the absolute authority of Scripture, sound doctrine, personal holiness, and finally...

V. Spiritual Authority

A. A Church Must Understand that Christ is the Head of the Church and that He Mediates His Rule Through Godly Men Called Elders

- [Colossians 1:18](#) says, that Jesus is “the head of the body, the church”
- In [1 Timothy 5:17](#), Paul says that the “elders rule” in the church
- He told the elders at Ephesus in [Acts 20:28](#), “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
- Elders are pastors who rule and oversee all the affairs of the church
- [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#) says that they “labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.”

- [Hebrews 13:7](#) says they “rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you”
- [Hebrews 13:17](#) says, they “rule over you” and “watch out for your souls, as those who must give account”
- [1 Peter 5:1-4](#) gives us the attitude by which they are to govern the church:
- They are to “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

B. The Church Must Understand that this is God’s Design for the Church to Function Properly

- 1. Christ is the head of the church**
- 2. He mediates His rule through godly men called elders**
- 3. Deacons come alongside and implement what the elders teach**
- 4. The congregation submits**

CONCLUSION

- If the church is going to be the Body of Christ, it has to have the right framework.
- It has to have *a high view of God*—the pursuit of the church should be to know God
- In seeking to know God, *the authority of Scripture* must be recognized, for it is through the Bible that we can know God
- A church should have a high view of Scripture and a commitment to teaching *sound doctrine*
- The people of a church should also seek *personal holiness* and submit their souls to the care of those the Lord has placed over them as *spiritual authorities*
- This is what should be at the foundation of our church
- I have purposely sought during my 7 years here to lay the foundation and continue to build on those truths
- If you ever wonder why we do some of the things we do it is because of these five nonnegotiable truths
- Now none of this is possible without a relationship to Christ because the natural, unsaved man does not recognize this
- In fact, he rages against it and the only remedy is a relationship with Christ
- So I urge you strongly to come to Christ and give Him the glory He is so worthy of

- Jesus came for the sole purpose of dying in your place for your sins
- And when you put your trust in Him, He will save you from His wrath that is coming on all those who are unbelieving
- Repent and believe in Christ right now
- If you would like to talk more after the service, I will be available for you
- Let's pray