

**GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS!** – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

**4 - 21 - 26 V1n50 16 Marks of an Authentic New Testament Church!** *[In this edition, see that 'dreams' of 2008, became 'reality' in 2025!]*

**SINCE 1980**, I have printed many editions of this article; I have followed the outline of it in many Sunday School Class settings, and in Saturday Men's Bible Studies, as well in 'Training Faithful Men' settings, and in Sunday sermons. **WHY SUCH REPETITION? – BECAUSE IT IS VITAL FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH!** [A FULL COPY of the booklet, with abundant Scripture references can be obtained through our Church office!]

The foundation for this 2026 Newsletter is one written and sent out in 2008. When I chose to use the 2008 edition, I did NOT know that there were special references in the 2008 edition to various 'ELDER issues' at Southside. (The good providence of God is encouraging!)

**SIXTEEN Marks (CONCEPTS!) of an Authentic New Testament Church!**

**AUTHENTIC:** This article is an effort to draw foundational *concepts of church life* FROM THE WORD OF GOD — to be used/applied to any local, Bible-believing, Christ-focused Congregation; and especially for those of us at Southside!

**CONCEPT ONE: The LORD JESUS CHRIST is our only Head.** We exist to worship Him, to make Him known and to do whatever He desires as He builds His church in His wisdom and power. He is the Head; we are a part of His Body. He is to get all the glory. He is the source of our life. He is the decision-maker; whatever He says goes! **The attraction in authentic Christianity, EXCLUSIVELY, is JESUS CHRIST and His gospel of grace!** Walking in His steps and manifesting His life we make him 'visible' to a watching world. JESUS CHRIST is the character-pattern against which everything we do is to be evaluated. Let us develop a passion to grow in His likeness.

**CONCEPT TWO: The Bible is our only infallible, (without lies or error) blueprint for Church life.** Jesus is the Living Truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. The Bible is the written, God-breathed Truth. The Living Truth gives us the written Truth quickened by the Spirit of Truth so that we may know God and His will for our lives. The written Word of God is given that we might, quickened by the Holy Spirit, know the God of the Word; and that we can know His will and grow in intimate fellowship with Him. The Bible expresses the mind of God inerrantly.

**The Bible is God-given for our only authoritative rule of faith and practice; and the supreme standard by which our conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried.**

**Guidance from God will not conflict with the pure Word of God.**

**To claim to love JESUS CHRIST while rejecting His Word is a spirit of anti-Christ.**

**CONCEPT THREE: Human traditions must bow to the Word of God.** The Word of God gives absolute truths and forms; but the Word of God also gives FREEDOMS. Whatever God has specifically laid down for us is absolute. **Example:** It is a Biblical 'absolute' that we are not to 'forsake assembling together' with other believers. It is absolute that we are to engage in 'true church work' by carrying out the many ONE TO ANOTHERS toward each other. But we have FREEDOM as to when and how often we meet as a congregation; and freedom as to precisely when and how to express the 'one anothers'. (We are never permitted to do things that are in violation of God's Word!)

**CONCEPT FOUR: God's goals for [Southside] are threefold—**

(1) The Glorification of God;  
 (2) the Edification of Believers/Saints;  
 (3) and the Evangelization of the world. As these are kept in balance, God makes Himself known through Southsiders in truth, in holiness and in love. **The Kingdom of God on earth through Southsiders will be** visible in righteousness, in peace, and in NINE-FOLD manifestations of FRUITFULNESS by the INDWELLING, COMPELING of the Holy Spirit.

**CONCEPT FIVE: When we gather, [Southside] is to be focused on carrying out ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES, such as—** Worship; Teaching; Mutual Ministries; The LORD'S SUPPER; Singing; Prayer; Sending and Receiving Missionaries; Carrying out discipline when needed; Praying for boldness to go back out into the world and live and proclaim the Gospel, etc.

**CONCEPT SIX: Evangelism is the DAILY task of ALL TRUE BELIEVERS** as God enables us to REACH OUT to minister and to serve people who are outside of Christ. A WITNESS for Jesus tells what they have seen, heard and experienced; they tell it truthfully and, thus, they help others to arrive at an accurate conclusion about Jesus.

**This is done OUT IN THE WORLD where the lost people live and work.** It is out in the world that the lost are to witness righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit, faith, hope and love flowing like a river from Southsiders. Such powerful MODELING of Jesus Christ makes our tracts and gospel preaching and presentations believable!

**CONCEPT SEVEN: Biblical Evangelism includes both,**

- (1)** A call to the LOST to receive the Gospel of Christ and
- (2)** the specific training or discipling of those who do receive Christ, so that each new believer grows in Christ-likeness and becomes an effective soldier of Christ and disciple of others.

**CONCEPT EIGHT: Southside, as a local church, is a primary Missionary sending agency.** We are responsible under God to recognize, to equip, and to send forth missionaries - following the pattern found in Acts 13.

**This includes 'local missions'** so that at the close of every Sunday's last congregational service we are all freshly COMMISSIONED as missionaries to the mission fields where we live and work!

**CONCEPT NINE: Offerings are given UNTO THE LORD to be used for His Kingdom work and ministry.** We are to first give OURSELVES. Our giving UNTO THE LORD is an expression of our STEWARDSHIP and of our GRATITUDE for God's grace in our lives. GOD DELIGHTS IN CHEERFUL HEART GIVING!

**CONCEPT TEN: Every believer is a Minister, a Believer-Priest,** who has been graced and gifted by God so that we may lovingly labor to build up our Brothers and Sisters in Christ and make Christ visible out in the world.

**The New Testament details and describes the true church work of every believer, as over 40 times the Holy Spirit calls us to minister the ONE ANOTHERS to each other.**

**CONCEPT ELEVEN: The Holy Spirit motivates and directs saints in service, ministry, work, and worship.** When Southsiders are being led by the Holy Spirit, the Church works together harmoniously and effectively.

**There are opportunities in our church services for the whole body to participate...** not only in congregational singing, but also in testimonies, and praises unto the LORD; and in many ministries... one unto another!! We must carefully embrace the call not to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit; but, rather, to be being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit led congregational services will manifest PRAISE to God and embrace and act upon TRUTH from God.

**CONCEPT TWELVE: The vision is for God to RAISE UP Elders and Deacons from within the congregation, as a general practice.** EVERY MEMBER is to be a minister, a servant. Some are set forth as EXAMPLES/Servant-Leaders before the congregation.

**[Notice what the 2008 edition ADDS: “We are at a point in the life of Southside where we must look unto the LORD for the raising up of additional deacons and for a return to the plurality of Elders.”]**

**EXPLANATION:** Somewhere around 2002-2003, **WE, as a congregation, GRIEVOUSLY sinned against the LOVE of GOD!**

**WE ENGAGED IN A DEEP, UGLY, SINFUL SPLIT!** ... (about ½ the congregation left ... about ½ stayed.) **By 2008**, (by the amazing mercies of God), those who stayed, were (BY 2008), in much healing and VERY close to the return to ELDERSHIP! ... and DID return ... & by the grace of God, we have flourished, since those days.

**FYI:** So far as I know... Most ... hopefully ‘all’ of those who left during those ‘weeping days’ of the split – are (in 2026) functioning in Christ’s freedom and in faithfulness to Him in various congregations!

**BACK TO CONCEPT 12— CONCEPT TWELVE: The vision is for God to RAISE UP Elders and Deacons from within the congregation, as a general practice. Pastors/Bishops/Elders, all one and the same, are a team of**

God-called, God-ordained men who, under Christ, are called to shepherd the local church.

**AGAIN, A STATEMENT FROM THE 2008 article:** “For the last several years, even though we have continued to have various men in the pulpit and not just one voice—nevertheless, officially we only have one man serving as Pastor/Elder. LET US DILIGENTLY seek the LORD and trust Him for the raising up of additional men.”

**ALSO FROM THE 2008 ARTICLE:** “It is common for churches to come to a time when the lone pastor leaves. Then the church starts from ground zero and seeks a pastor. They find one from somewhere and a new era starts with hope and excitement, but usually conflict and ‘divorce’ quickly follow. Why? Strangers ‘married’ and woke up a few months later to many SURPRISES!”

**AGAIN, WRITING IN 1008--** **“I BELIEVE THERE IS A BETTER MODEL TO EMBRACE:** With plurality of **ELDERSHIP, we have the opportunity to have a ‘seamless’ transition from one ‘LEAD’ pastor/elder to another.**

**MORE FROM 2008:** “We [must] begin to cry out to God to show us, to lead us to an additional, younger, pastor/elder who would labor full-time and alongside the current Lead Pastor. The younger is mentored by the older, they function as a team; but as time goes along, **there is a seamless transition** where by the younger becomes the lead pastor and the older could continue to serve for many years, but would be more and more in a roll of support and not lead. The church family and ministry is able to continue without disruption.” (And, I repeat... that was written in 2008!)

***[NOW! In 2008, there was a certain teenager, named JADEN ALLEN, WHOM NONE OF US HAD NEVER EVEN MET; NOR HAD HE MET US!***

***Even so, over the years between 2008 and 2025 — God unfolded the ‘2008 Scripture-rooted’ vision which He had given.... while also working in Jaden’s heart ...***

***SO THAT, on the FIRST SUNDAY IN MAY of 2025, in an amazing grace transition, we received and welcomed JADEN ALLEN as our new LEAD SERVANT PASTOR ; ALONG with welcoming his PRECIOUS WIFE and family!]***

***“PRAISE GOD, FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW ...” !!***

**CONCEPT THIRTEEN: The function of pastors/elders at Southside is to serve as “Player-Coaches” of the Congregation.** A primary function is to EQUIP THE MEMBERS for their God-Appointed ministries, so that the whole body will be built up in love and Christ-likeness.

**CONCEPT FOURTEEN: The local church and the Home are two Divine institutions.** They should not compete but complete and complement one another. The Church should BUILD UP families.

**Strong, Godly families** are vital for a vibrant Congregation. God holds parents to be primarily responsible for the training and discipling of children. The Church has a roll of support.

**CONCEPT FIFTEEN: A local church is A BODY of believers.** Even as the MEMBERS of our human bodies are

COMMITTED to ONE BODY and thus empowered TOGETHER to minister to OTHERS, even so it is in the church at Southside. We must make forward steps in this Biblical pattern.

**CONCEPT SIXTEEN: Serious attention should be given to make sure that Southside Church remains both united and pure.** As a part of this process, prayerful and humble application of Biblical Standards concerning Church Discipline need to be applied. *[Note: Space did not permit the listing of the many Scriptures which support this article. (Ask for the original booklet!)]*

Grace to all in Christ! James Bell [www.southsidegallatin.org](http://www.southsidegallatin.org)

## **SUNDAY SERVICES for APRIL 26**

**[1] Sunday School at 9:30am:** Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes. **[2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

**[3] \*\*\* FROM Pastor Jaden: "This Sunday evening at 5pm -- The Cardinal Singers, a high school choir from the Red Bird School will be singing for us at Southside. I encourage you to attend if you are able and meet some of the young people and adults that Ken Smith, the Whites, and others have been ministering to and with there at Red Bird."**

**From Mark Smallwood, [their] choir director:** "It's that time of year for the Cardinal Singers to fly from their nest at Red Bird Mission School! These students, grades 7-12, are coming your way and are excited to meet you and share their songs, dulcimer music, testimonies and drama. Jesus is at work in the lives of these young people and they are eager to share what He has done for them."

**EVERY SATURDAY \*\*\* 8:00 AM,** — Men's Bible Study!  
(Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits are available!) **APRIL 25, Romans 8:28-39**

**NEXT Ladies Bible Study TUESDAY, 4/28/26 @ 11:00 AM – Read Acts 9:1-31**

**\*\*\*TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am**

***Young Adults ... Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhi's home!***

**WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, MEN'S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE**

**LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD by MAIL or by ONLINE:**

**BY MAIL (checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 /**

**TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING:**

**<https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>**