



Background to our name change

First, let me state that Saylorville Church is a greatly blessed and incredibly grateful church. We have enjoyed God's blessings in seeing many people coming to Jesus over the past several years. Just a few weeks ago, our third church plant in the last 8 years, already seeing souls saved, baptized, and becoming part of its membership, was incorporated. To God be the glory!

Now, we realize to some the line, "If it ain't broke don't fix it" might come to mind. But the reality is, over the past five or six years we have personally observed a mounting resistance to identifying ourselves as Saylorville *Baptist* Church. People literally have shut down or brushed us off before we could get an opportunity to explain who we are, or better, who we're not. Perhaps some of you are now thinking, "Well there are other statistics out there that would say otherwise." I'm sure there are. But our experience is *our* experience. It's actual. It's personal. We have made hundreds of calls on homes and discovered repeatedly that when we identify ourselves as 'Baptist' up front it became an affront to those we were attempting to reach.

Throughout this time Saylorville Church has been planting churches. All three church plants have pastors who, along with myself, have received degrees from Faith. In our understanding of Scripture, a church plant should exist for the primary purpose of glorifying God by obeying the Great Commission. In each case, our church planting pastors, while genuinely baptistic, saw the name on the church as an inhibitor of gospel outreach. Again, you might not agree with our assessment, but we've done the "boots on the ground" work. We have the proof to back up our thinking. Question: If you are a Baptist in name, do you ever refrain from actually mentioning that when you share Jesus with someone? If so, why, if the name does not inhibit the gospel? If you do mention it, my guess is you know exactly what I'm talking about.

During a Fireside Chat at our church in early November, we listed three motivations for changing our name by simply removing 'Baptist' from our marquee:

1. To identify more closely with the New Testament model of church names. "To the church at...Corinth...Ephesus...Smyrna" etc. FYI: 'Baptist' churches go back only to around 1644 in England – less than 400 years.
2. It is consistent with our Church Planting Philosophy of identifying with our community. The Church is *WHO* we are. And Saylorville is *WHERE* we are.

3. Above all – our desire to fan the flame of gospel outreach without the inhibition of an extra-Biblical and often confusing name.

For the record:

- Saylorville Church is in fact still a Baptist church in fellowship with the GARBC.
- The decision of Saylorville Church was in no way influenced by anything the GARBC has stood for in the past, or in recent days, on 'Baptist' being in a church name.
- FBBC did change their student and faculty policy as it pertains to church attendance once Saylorville announced its intention to remove 'Baptist' from its name.
- Saylorville never sought to distance itself from FBBC by this change. In fact, we informed the school early on. Our intention was to make this change as quietly as possible.
- Though we strongly disagree with FBBC's decision to separate from Saylorville Church, our correspondence with the president and board has been both civil and gracious.

Response to the bulletin insert, "A Tale of Two Colleges"

<http://sharperiron.org/article/tale-of-two-colleges>

I appreciate Dr. Kevin Bauder, former president of Central Seminary, and his courage to enter into the controversy between Saylorville Church and Faith Baptist Bible College. With his keen mind he has articulated the different paths that Cedarville University and FBBC have taken in the face of controversy. I am also thankful for the kind words he expressed of Saylorville Church. I do, however, take issue with Dr. Bauder's analogy of what the late Dr. David Nettleton was addressing in a well known article written many years ago, as well as his use of the word 'principles' as it pertains to FBBC.

Kevin's article cites Dr. David Nettleton's well-known article he placed in the Baptist Bulletin years ago titled, "Limited Message or Limited Fellowship?" While Kevin's conclusion that FBBC "is willing to accept narrower influence in order to uphold (their principles)" is true, his analogy is false. By comparing what FBBC is doing to what Dr. Nettleton admonished us to do is a false comparison. Dr. Nettleton's article is not long and he makes a beeline to his point: whether or not one will widen or limit his fellowship. Dr. Nettleton's article is clearly referring to sound doctrine and whether or not one will choose to fellowship with those who would not ascribe to sound doctrine. By citing this

well-known, and in some ways, seminal article on separation by Dr. Nettleton, Dr. Bauder insinuates that this is a doctrinal matter. One thing is very clear, *this variance between Saylorville Church and Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary has never been a doctrinal matter*. In fact, the president of the college has said on more than one occasion, "This is not a biblical separation issue."

Dr. Bauder repeatedly refers to Faith's 'principles' they have stood by for years. Question: What 'principle' of Faith's is under threat in maintaining fellowship with Saylorville Church? More specifically, what Biblical principle is at risk of compromise?

One more thing, Dr. Bauder's article insinuates that the name 'Baptist' is somehow a form of protection in and of itself from doctrinal slippage. One of the counter arguments to what we have done in removing 'Baptist' from our name has been, "What will you be like in five years?" My response continues to be, "What will *you* be like in five years?" What a silly question. Once again, the insinuation is that the simple removing of a denominational label is not only the avenue but some kind of trap door by which we will fall into doctrinal deviance. But I would push further. How does *anyone* know where their church will be in five years? Because the church swears that by having 'Baptist' on its marquee it will never deviate from sound doctrine, is an appalling assumption. Paul's call in Ephesians 4 is that we all must "endeavor to keep" (preserve, watch over) and maintain peace and sound doctrine. Jude was literally stopped in his tracks from writing a letter on salvation and led by God toward a fiery call to "defend the faith". How silly to think that sound doctrine is somehow maintained by a label on the front of the church. It is the work of every generation to endeavor to hold to the historical truths of God laid down in the Book of books.

Could it be that Dr. Bauder has touched a nerve of fear? Could it be that at the core of what Faith Baptist Bible College has done is to say, "We will separate from Saylorville Church and any other church that removes 'Baptist' from its marquee for fear of 1,000 "what ifs"? What if the music leads to this? What if the relaxed dress environment leads to that? Etc.

Dr. Bauder speculates, "This may represent the hardest decision that the administration and board at Faith has ever made."

Indeed.

Finally....

One of the criticisms leveled against us is that our name change lacks clarity. Yet this has been the very reason we have made this move, our now former name lacked clarity. In 'Erasing Hell' Francis Chan writes, "If you call someone a Baptist, all you've said is that they don't baptize babies – beyond this, it's pretty much up for grabs". The 'Baptist'

name has lost the clarity it might once have possessed. It no longer stands tall as a gospel centered, life-changing church it once did. Question: What occurs when you tell an unsaved person you are a Baptist? (Obviously referring to you who are Baptists.) Have you even gone beyond speculation? Would you be willing to take the test? We have and have found the name wanting.

To you who might be anxious to respond to this, I leave you with a story from the life of D. L. Moody who, ironically, inspired Dr. Jordan who is the founder of what is now FBBC. A man once criticized the 19th Century evangelist and said to him, "Mr. Moody, I don't like your method of evangelism." Moody responded, "I don't either. What method do you use?" Stunned by Moody's reply, the man answered, "I don't have a method." Moody quickly responded, "Then I think I *do* like my method better."

Saylorville Church has set sail with a new name. FBBC has made their decision in response to our change and I have no doubt they plan to stick by it. May God help us both! At the end of the day all we who are true Christ followers will individually stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Everything will get settled there. That should be good enough for all of us.

Pat Nemmers, Lead Pastor, Saylorville Church