



**“Influence: The Motive Of
A Christ Centered Church”
Acts 2:46-47**

Introduction

Today Cary First Baptist Church is celebrating a significant milestone— 150 years.

Since September of 1874 Cary First Baptist Church has had gospel influence in this town.

For 150 years Cary First Baptist Church has been faithfully **Preaching** the Word of God, **Praising** the Living God, **Praying** for our community, **Serving** our community, **Giving** our resources that God has blessed us with, **Sharing** the Good News of Jesus, **Baptizing** followers of Christ, **Spiritually Developing** followers of Christ and being a force for eternal good in our town, our community, our state, our country and around the world.

So today—

We Celebrate What God has done in the past.

We remember what God has done in the past, we remember the people in the past who have brought us to this point, we remember the vision, the blessings, the hardships, and the moments of bold faith. We remember the power of God to supply our needs, we remember the leadership of the Holy Spirit to protect us from the evil one and lead us to where we are right now.

We are Thankful for the Past

We learn from the Past

We must not live in the Past

One of the great dangers of any church with a rich and storied past is focusing on the past.

When we focus on the past it is difficult to move forward to the future God has for us.

When we focus on the past we believe our best days are behind us not in front of us.

A church or any organization is defined by the past, the past will diminish and ultimately destroy that church or organization.

The Value of Setting Organizational Priorities by Anna Domanska, June 2015

From 2005-2015 50% of companies on the Fortune 500 list either went bankrupt, merged with another company, were acquired, or fell off the list.

The failure and or diminished success of these companies was not an accident it was the result of several issues: Stiff Competition, Customer Demands, Operational Efficiency, Poor Leadership, and lack of Strategic Priorities/ unwillingness to change and move forward.

One company that fell off the list of Fortune 500 companies is the Eastman Kodak Corporation.

Kodak was founded on September 4, 1888. by George Eastman. He turned his passion for photography into a powerful and profitable corporation that influenced the entire world. For more than a hundred years Kodak was the biggest name in photography. They were the leader in the industry, the leader in research and development, the leader in technology, the leader in marketing/ branding they made popular the phrase “**Kodak Moment.**” “**Kodak Moments**” were those special events that required a special photograph to capture the moment. Until the early 2,000’s people that took a picture used a Kodak camera, Kodak film, Kodak paper and Kodak

photographic development technology. Year after year after year they dominated the photography market share. Once a thriving corporation with Billions of dollars in profits, market recognition and corporate respect— they filed for bankruptcy in 2012 owing billions more than the company was worth.

Kodak is still a corporation but they were forced out of the photography business and now they are focusing on commercial printing.

Eastman Kodak the company that founded the photography industry, dominated their market share and produced Kodak Moments— died a slow, painful and agonizing corporate death.

How did such a successful, profitable, admired and dominant corporation go bankrupt?

Historians and Analysts have their opinions why Kodak went bankrupt. I believe four things caused Kodak's demise.

1. **Pride**— We are Kodak, we are too big to fail. We are good at what we do. Everybody wants what we can provide.
2. **Mis-placed Passion**— George Eastman founded Kodak with his passion for photography. Making money was never his purpose or his passion— it was a huge benefit of his passion for photography. George Eastman's purpose was for Kodak to create a simple, effective and inexpensive way for people to capture life's special moments with a photograph.
3. **Complacency**— Kodak was far and away the leader in the photography industry. They really had no formidable competition. The executive leaders at Kodak became complacent because of their sustained success. When Kodak executives realized they were consistently losing revenue it was too late to reverse the damage.
4. **Reluctance to Change**— Executives from crisis communications firms around the world have observed that reactive decision-making gives the illusion of control but does not create consistent, successful results. Day

to day and decide as you go— reactive decision making lacks focus and does not have goals. The intentional task of identifying and establishing priorities makes a significant difference in the sustained success of any organization.

There are important attributes about our church that must never change:

The life giving message of Jesus Christ must never change, Bold Biblical Preaching, Authentic Worship, Intentional Prayer, Serving others, Sharing the Good News of Jesus, Baptism, Communion, Stewardship, and Spiritual Development must never change.

The world we live in is changing, our town is changing!

Our town, vendors on the street, and special interest groups can promote their beliefs, their agenda and their lifestyle up and down our streets, in the park and even in the city Christmas parade, but some people want Cary First Baptist Church to stand by and sit in silence.

Trip Advisor Review

I visited Cary for the first time and found the city to be quite pleasant. The only major exception was the annoying music emanating from a keyboardist/singer from outside the First Baptist Church. With all due respect to the church's mission and assumed calling to invite and welcome new parishioners, the music could be heard down the entire street and was no less obnoxious than a kid blasting his favorite tunes from his jacked up hotrod while driving with the windows down. It should stop. I cannot believe the town allows it. Please, First Baptist Church, find a way to fulfill your mission without being so intrusive. The entire town does not belong to you.

WE WILL NOT SIT IN SILENCE!

Our town needs Jesus more so now than ever!

I Corinthians 1:23-25 “but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. ²⁴ Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, ²⁵ because God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.” CSB

Colossians 1:28-29 “We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me.” CSB

John 15:20 “Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” CSB

Church, we need to make much of Jesus on the streets of downtown, in the park and all over Cary!

Mark, thank you for your passion to make much of Jesus!

We Celebrate What God is doing now

God is blessing the ministry of Cary First Baptist Church.

We celebrate that our purpose is coming to life— Cary First exists to demonstrate the love and share the Good News of Jesus every day, everywhere, with everyone.

God is doing exciting things at Cary First Baptist Church through our relentless pursuit to chase His vision and to live on mission so we can accomplish His purpose and advance His Kingdom on the earth.

We Celebrate what God will continue to do through the ministry of Cary First Baptist Church until Jesus comes again.

Scripture

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts,

⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. CSB

Quotes of the Day

“A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.”
— Jackie Robinson

“When the light of Jesus shines through us we will influence others to do the same.” — Pat Kilby

Influence— The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself.

One Solitary Life

Dr. James Allan Francis 1864—1928

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village as the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty and then for three years was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of his divine manhood.

While still a young man the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. Another betrayed him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon the cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth while he was dying, and that was his seamless robe. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Twenty wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the center of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat and all the

kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon the earth as powerfully as has this One Solitary Life.

We must never underestimate the influence of Jesus in our life, our family, our church, our town and the world.

The motive of a Christ Centered Church is to influence people with the Good News of Jesus so that they will experience the love of Jesus and be saved.

Acts 2:47 says, “Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” CSB

Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have Eight Qualities

- 1. The Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit**
- 2. A Clear and Compelling Purpose**
- 3. Profound Urgency**
- 4. Continual Prayer**
- 5. Bold and Biblical Preaching**
- 6. Committed People**
- 7. Devoted People**
- 8. A Strategic Process**

Slide

Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

- 1. The Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit**

Acts 1:8 “**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you**, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” CSB

Jesus told His disciples they would receive “**power**” from the Holy Spirit.

The term translated “power” comes from the Greek word “**dunamis.**”

Dunamis is where we get the word “**dynamite**” from.

Dunamis carries with it the idea of power in action, the ability to perform anything, having the power within to accomplish great things.

Before Jesus defined the purpose of the Church He identified the power of the Church!

The power of the Authentic Church is the Holy Spirit!

Any person and any church can go through the motions of doing church but an Authentic follower of Christ and an Authentic Church must be empowered by the Holy Spirit of God!

A Christ Centered person and and Christ Centered Church can accomplish anything because we possess the power of the Holy Spirit of God!

Living with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit causes every follower of Christ to live a different life!

An early Christian document known as the Epistle to Diognetus (c. A.D. 120-200) is believed to have been written by a man named Athenagoras. In one important section the author describes how Christians are alike—and different from others: The difference between Christians and the rest of mankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or customs. Christians do not live in separate cities of their own, speak any special dialect, not practice any eccentric way of life. ... They pass their lives in whatever township—Greek or foreign—each man's lot has determined; and conform to ordinary local usage in their clothing, diet, and other habits.

Nevertheless, the organization of their community does exhibit some features that are remarkable, and even surprising. For instance, though they are residents at home in their own countries, their behavior there is more like transients. ... Though destiny has placed them here in the flesh, they do not live after the flesh; their days are passed on earth, but their citizenship is above in the heavens. They obey the prescribed laws, but in their own private lives they transcend the laws. They show love to all men—and all men persecute them. They are misunderstood, and condemned;

yet by suffering death they are quickened into life. They are poor, yet making many rich; lacking all things, yet having all things in abundance. ... They repay [curses] with blessings, and abuse with courtesy. For the good they do, they suffer stripes as evildoers. Citation: *James Bryan Smith, The Good and Beautiful Community (IVP, 2010), pp. 28-29.*

Those who live with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are called to live a different life.

Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

2. A Clear and Compelling Purpose

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**” CSB

Purpose answers the question “why?” Why do we do the things we do?

Every follower of Christ and every Church should ask the question: “Why do we do the things we do?”

Search and rescue personnel risk their lives in tumultuous seas, deep forests, remote mountains, and desert wastelands. Wherever they're needed they go. When called, they respond, because lives are in danger. A Search and Rescue Team in Colorado puts it this way: "Millions of people visit the mountains of Larimer County, Colorado, each year. A few will become lost, stranded, or injured...some will die. Our objective is to find and rescue these lost or injured people before it is too late.... We are dedicated to saving lives." Search and Rescue Teams have a standard motto: "This we do so others may live." Citation: www.larimercountysar.org,

Just as search and rescue teams have a reason for what they do every follower of Christ and every Christ honoring Church should have a clear and compelling reason for what we do!

Jesus said to His disciples, “You will be my witnesses . . .”

The term translated “**witnesses**” comes from the Greek word “**martus.**”

Martus is familiar because that is where the word “**martyr**” comes from.

The word “**martus**” refers to a person who lives their life as a witness bearing record of what they have seen, heard and believe.

“**Martus**” also refers to a person who is willing to die for what they have seen, heard and believe to be true!

In essence Jesus was telling His disciples: You will be a record bearing witness of what you have seen, heard and believe about me in life and death!

Every person who has committed their life to Christ has a clear and compelling purpose to be a witness for Christ bearing record of what we have seen, heard and believe about Jesus Christ!

An “A Christ Centered Church” is made up of followers of Christ who are striving to be witnesses for Christ bearing record in our life of what we have seen, heard, and believe about Jesus!

Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

3. Profound Urgency

Acts 1:9-11 After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.” CSB

In his sermon titled “The Theatre Is On Fire” the Reverend Ethan Magness quoted the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard who told this parable: A crowded theater hosted a variety show, with various acts in it. Each act was more fantastic than the one prior, so it created louder and louder applause from the audience. Suddenly, a clown rushed on to the stage and

said, “I apologize for this interruption, but I regret to inform you that our theater is on fire! You need to leave right away, and in an orderly fashion.” But the audience thought he was part of the act, so they laughed and applauded. They thought he was very committed to the role. But the clown again implored them that they needed to leave right away or they would get seriously injured, maybe even die. And again, they greeted him with loud and thunderous applause. At last, he could do no more, and so he left the building, and the people were destroyed.

And Kierkegaard concludes in this sobering way: Without a sense of profound urgency “Our age will go down in fiery destruction not to the sound of mourning but to applause and cheering.” Citation: Rev. Ethan Magness, Sermon: “The Theater is on Fire,” Grace Anglican Church (12-1-19)

Ecclesiastes 9:10 “Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your strength, because there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.” CSB

Psalms 90:10-12 “Our lives last seventy years or, if we are strong, eighty years. Even the best of them are struggle and sorrow; indeed, they pass quickly and we fly away. ¹¹ Who understands the power of your anger? Your wrath matches the fear that is due you. ¹² Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.” CSB

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Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

4. Continual Prayer

Acts 1:12-14 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ **They all were continually united in prayer**, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. CSB

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Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

5. Bold and Biblical Preaching

Acts 2:14-16 “Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, “Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. ¹⁵For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it’s only nine in the morning. ¹⁶On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: CSB

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Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

6. Committed People

Acts 2:37-41 “When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation!” CSB

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Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

7. Devoted People

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.” CSB

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Christ Centered Churches seeking to influence people with the Good News of Jesus have:

8. A Strategic Process

Acts 2:43-47a “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. ⁴⁵They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.” CSB