

**2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters**  
**Sermon Series - Focus On What Drives Us**  
**Sermon Title - The One Who Matters**  
**Sermon Text - Acts 12:24 – 13:3**  
**Sermon Presenter - Dr. Reggie Ogea**

Acts 12:24 But the word of God spread and multiplied.

Acts 12:25 After they had completed their relief mission, Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem, taking along John who was called Mark.

Acts 13:1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers:

Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 13:2 As they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Acts 13:3 Then after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off.

Someone once accused Billy Graham, the renowned crusade evangelist who preached to hundreds of millions of people worldwide, of setting the church back 50 years. He responded:

"I'm deeply ashamed. I've been trying very hard to set the church back 2000 years."

The question before us this morning –

What does a healthy church look like?

The Acts of the Apostles provide a brief, yet comprehensive historical narrative of the birth and development of the first-century church. Jesus proposed early in his ministry that

"He would build His church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

The text we just read bookends the first-half of the church's history, highlighting the apostles and the Jerusalem church. From this point forward, Jerusalem's involvement in the advance of first-century Christianity will connect to Paul's ministry as the ministry of Peter and his fellow apostles fades into the background. Let's do a quick executive summary.

The church birthed with 120 believers gathered at an upper room prayer meeting (Acts 1:15),

Exploded with 3000 saved after Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:41),

By the end of two weeks, 5000 more men believed on the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:4).

A week later, Acts 5:14 concluded that "believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers – multitudes of both men and women – too many to count.

Persecution scattered these first Christians away from Jerusalem to the north, and the second great church in Acts coalesced into the Antioch church, where...

“the Lord’s hand was with them – large numbers who believed turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:24).

Thus the first half of Acts ends with simple summation –

“the word of God spread and multiplied.” (Acts 12:24)

The second half of Acts allows us to eavesdrop on the Antioch church as they met together for prayer and fasting. In what we would call a congregational meeting, or a business meeting, they voted to set apart Barnabas and Paul as the first missionaries and church planters. The entire second half of Acts chronicled three missionary journeys of Paul and his team as they planted churches all over Europe. I’m convinced that the church birthed in Jerusalem and expanded to Antioch grew and multiplied in extraordinary proportion because they embraced the things that matter. I propose to you today that what mattered in the first century matters in the 21st century.

### **1. Prayer Matters.**

The first Christians prayed with expectancy and faith. They believed God answered prayer with power and provision. Prayer unified them so that they enjoyed a common koinonia. Four prayer meetings are described in Acts, implying that prayer became a regular, if not daily discipline. If prayer matters, we ought to pray like it matters. Does prayer matter at Northshore Church?

### **2. Preaching Matters.**

The 12 Apostles developed into Spirit-filled preachers, proclaiming a Christ-centered message of Jesus Christ crucified and Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead. They preached with conviction because they were convinced that conviction creates a dilemma in a person’s mind and heart which leads to a decision. Three sermons are scripted in Acts: Peter’s Pentecost sermon, Stephen’s martyr sermon and Paul’s Mars Hill sermon. If preaching matters, we ought to expect and demand that those who serve us as pastors and teachers preach with Christ-centered conviction. Does preaching matter at Northshore Church?

### **3. Unity Matters.**

The first Christians devoted themselves into a commonality resulting in a community of faith where they experienced all things common. All the believers – no exception, no hold-out, no half-way, all the believers were together and held all things in common – koina. If unity matters, then we ought to guard unity as the most precious possession of the church. If unity matters, then not even major conflict would divide and disrupt the church. Does unity matter at Northshore Church?

### **4. Doctrine Matters.**

The first Christians devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching = didache. These teachings would have included the Old Testament Scripture plus all Jesus' coaching and instructions they received as eyewitnesses. From the very beginning, every time the first Christians met together they prioritized doctrinal instruction. If doctrine matters, we ought to contend earnestly (Jude 3) and hold fast to our theology. Does doctrine matter at Northshore Church?

### **5. Fellowship Matters.**

A koinonia described a relational bond which tightly knit these believers together. The first Christians quickly developed a relational koinonia. Relational koinonia is extremely important to God. Relational koinonia is multiethnic, intercultural, and multigenerational. If fellowship matters, then we ought to become one in the bond of love. Does fellowship matter at Northshore Church?

### **6. Worship Matters.**

Their worship gatherings generated joyful, sincere hearts, praising God. They did not neglect their assembling together regularly to worship the one true God (Hebrews 10:25). Worship is not genuine and God-honoring unless it swells from an attitude of the heart that is joyful, regular, and celebratory. If worship matters, then it must become at least a weekly celebration of what God is doing. Does worship matter at Northshore Church?

### **7. Generosity Matters.**

The DNA of the first century church coagulated into a community of equality, emphasizing shared ministry responsibility – a voluntary response to meet every need from within the resources of the believers themselves. Generosity matters, because without a spirit of generosity, needs go unmet. Without generosity, ministry is minimized. Does generosity matter at Northshore Church?

### **8. Supernatural Matters.**

Miracles, signs, and wonders positioned as common occurrences in the first century church. Supernatural defined the unexplainable and extraordinary – beyond normal to abnormal. It is impossible to believe in a sovereign God and not believe in miracles. If Supernatural matters, then extraordinary must become ordinary. If supernatural matters, then the common response in a healthy church is "It's a God-thing!" Does supernatural matter at Northshore Church?

### **9. Evangelism Matters.**

Personal witnessing marked the lifestyle of the first Christians. They believed that people need the Lord, so much so that they intentionally reached the left-outs, the opt-outs, and the locked-outs. The church's greatest concern ought to be for those we are leaving behind. If

evangelism matters, then we ought to witness like it matters. If evangelism matters, then personal soul-winning is every Christian's responsibility. Does evangelism matter at Northshore Church?

### **10. Convictions Matter.**

These first-century Christians settled three convictions beyond reasonable doubt. No one gets to heaven without an encounter with Jesus. No one has an encounter with Jesus without the boldness of ordinary people. No one is beyond the reach of God's hand. Convictions matter because people matter to God. Convictions matter in a church, because without them, culture and politics will erode a society in general and a community in particular. Do convictions matter at Northshore Church?

### **11. Leadership Matters.**

The first-century church refused to be divided by ministry needs unmet. They developed leaders and equipped leaders through spiritual leadership and shared leadership, which produced a satisfied church. If leadership matters, then we ought to expect and demand the highest integrity from those we enlist and ordain as spiritual leaders. Does leadership matter at Northshore Church?

### **12. Persecution Matters.**

The first Christians expected, endured and experienced persecution – intense, inevitable and invasive persecution in the form of hatred, insult, harassment, exclusion, rejection, and discrimination. Following Jesus is costly. Persecution matters, because Jesus is worth it. These 12 common matters describe and define a healthy church. In healthy, growing, revitalized churches, prayer matters, preaching matters, unity matters, doctrine matters, fellowship matters, worship matters, generosity matters, supernatural matters, evangelism matters, convictions matter, leadership matters, and persecution matters. But there's one more thing that matters, and it is the one that matters, and that one is Jesus Christ.

### **Jesus Christ is the one who matters!**

**Isaiah predicted Him:** "For a child will be born for us, a son will be given us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." (9:6)

**The angel announced Him:** "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord (Luke 2:10-11)

**John the Baptist introduced Him:** "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)

**The author of Hebrews declared Him:** as the rightful heir of all things eternal, the one by whom the worlds were made, the visible image of the invisible God,

the sustaining force of the universe, and the savior of all mankind. (Hebrews 1:1-4)

**Paul and Barnabas “risked their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”** (Acts 15:26)

**John the Revelator saw Him,** riding on a white horse...

“His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head. He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.

The armies that were in heaven followed him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. A sharp sword came from his mouth, so that he might strike the nations with it.

He will rule them with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty.

And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”  
(Revelation 19:12-16)

Of all the things that matter in the church, Jesus Christ is the one who matters the most. No other name but the name of Jesus. On Christ the solid rock I stand – all other ground is sinking sand. In Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song. Hallelujah, praise the one who set me free, Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me, You have broken every chain, There's salvation in your name, Jesus Christ, my living hope. Jesus You are stronger, More than any other, Hallelujah what a savior Jesus You are higher, My soul's deepest desire, Hallelujah what a savior. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know, fills my every longing, keeps me singing as I go.

When United flight 93 was hijacked on 9/11 by al-Qaeda terrorists, Todd Beamer attempted to call his wife from row 32 on his seat phone. His call was routed to GTE operator Lisa Jefferson. He quickly whispered the situation and explained that a group of passengers were planning to take action against the hijackers. Beamer quietly recited the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm with Jefferson, prompting those seated around him to join in. Beamer requested of Jefferson, "If I don't make it, please call my family and let them know how much I love them." Then Jefferson heard Todd Beamer's last words: "Are you ready? Okay. Let's roll." Sounds good to me. Are you ready church? Let's roll. Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus, going on before.