

# It Happened Like This . . .

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## “It Doesn’t Matter...”

It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe. It doesn't matter what church you attend or even if you attend or not. It doesn't matter... Secularism is comfortable saying that. Secularism does not try to deny God but says it does not matter. Some who say they belong to Jesus have fallen into the trap of saying it does not matter. Doctrinal issues are not worth fighting for. Denominations only divide. And so it goes.

The Bible Fellowship Church has recently seen that not everyone accepts these ideas. Men have been applying to serve who are drawn by our doctrine. And, some are drawn to the support that comes when men are determined to be accountable to each other.

Church Extension Ministries has received inquiries from independent churches attracted by a clear doctrinal statement and a desire to be accountable for what they believe and do. That goes against the thinking that doctrine and denomination do not matter.

One such inquiry came from a church that calls itself Hope Community. Phil Ruiz serves as its pastor. Both the church and Phil were committed to a theological understanding which tends to put human decision making at the center of the response to the Gospel. Phil came in contact with other pastors who looked at what the Bible taught in a different way than he had. They did not deny that believing is a choice to be made but pointed out that the human choice follows God's choice. Pastor



Phil Ruiz

Phil became aware that such a human centered understanding could never lead to assurance. He writes, “Reformed Theology gives God the glory and shows how intentional Christ is in our lives. It helped me to a clearer understanding of God's sovereignty, freeing me from the burden of trying to gain salvation or God's favor with my works. I have found a new passion for sharing the Gospel with others!”

Pastor Phil began to preach this truth to his congregation. People began to leave and the church dwindled. But some stayed because they knew they were seeing the broader truth of God's word. Soon they were in contact with the BFC and are in the process of applying to be recognized as a BFC church.

A similar spiritual journey is described by Pastor Barry Parsons who serves as the lead pastor of Harvest Fellowship. Barry's theological rooting was much like Phil Ruiz's. Barry was deeply committed to expositional preaching of God's word that seeks to unfold God's truth from the text. He was using commentaries that pointed him to expand his understanding of God's role in salvation. He writes, “Along the way God graciously sent men into my life who were traveling the same path of theological discovery, and I came to realize that the monergistic work of God in salvation exalted God and not man. That revelation lifted my worship to a higher level than ever before. God was exceedingly greater and more glorious than I could have ever imagined.”



Barry Parsons

Like Phil, Barry began to preach what he was discovering. And, the results were the same. People began leaving but some stayed. Barry was supported by the elders of his church who shared his journey and joy. The church decided it needed to declare what it believed in a clear and concise way. They looked at some expressions of doctrine and accepted the BFC Articles of Faith long before they ever considered becoming part of the BFC.

Harvest Fellowship has since applied and been accepted as a mission church of the BFC. Barry is completing the process of being recognized for ordination which is necessary for the church to become a BFC church.

Doctrine and denomination do matter. What you believe does matter. The identity and accountability that comes with being part of a denomination matter as well.

- Richard Taylor  
Mentoring Assistant



Church Extension Ministries  
PO Box 753  
Whitehall, PA 18052  
610-769-4337  
office@churchplantingbfc.org  
www.churchplantingbfc.org