

Sent by God: His People on His Mission

<u>LESSON 8: Values that Guide Us and Give Us Identity</u>

Reviewing our Mission

For several weeks we have explored the vision and mission of this church. We have asked how hopeful people share hope. What does God send us forth to do? What is God's plan for this church? We identified concepts that summarize our mission. God sends us forth to fly on wings as eagles and to ASCEND to the heights: Adoring, Sharing, Connecting, Evangelizing, and Nurturing faith as Disciples.

Our Values

The second part of this series explores our core values. What values support the vision and mission of this church, shaping us and giving us identity? What values guide us as we seek to develop a 'mission-shaped' church? We focus on six values that reflect our mission and shape us as a church.

Truth. Because we value truth, we value the Bible as the Word of God and <u>biblical teaching</u>. We want to know and apply the Bible in real and relevant ways. Our commitment to truth reminds us that God calls us to be *approved workers* (2 Tim. 2:15).

Unity. Because we value unity, we seek <u>peaceful</u> <u>harmony</u>. We maintain unity in the Spirit of God because we are *spiritual brothers* (Eph. 4:1-6).

Touch. One indication of God's presence is TLC—touching, loving care. God touches our world through us. Because we are *ambassadors* (2 Cor. 5:17-20), we value caring evangelism.

Christian Living. We seek to <u>live like Jesus</u>, believing that he calls us to be like him, as his *disciples* (Luke 6:40).

Love. We seek to <u>love like Jesus</u> in the relationships of life. This love shows first in the way we share our

lives as Christians, reflecting our commitment to be the *family of God* (Eph. 3:14-20) and calling others into the family.

Ministry. Because we desire excellence in ministry, we are committed to equipping and empowering one another, recognizing that all are called to be *servants* in the likeness of Jesus (Mark 10:45).

Truth and Unity

Historically the two great pillars of the restoration plea are truth and unity. Commitment to the truth of God's word, and an intense desire for unity have characterized the faith throughout the centuries, from New Testament times to the present. Unfortunately, these two commitments at times have seemed mutually exclusive. A strong commitment to unity has often lessened the commitment to truth. A strong commitment to truth has made unity less probable.

As a result, many today have given up on one or the other of these foundational values. Some seek unity with little regard for truth; others hold strongly to truth and give little more than lip service to unity. Some unity-seekers seem to say, "Unity at any price." Some truth-seekers seem to say, "Unity only on my terms." or "truth only as I define it."

These tensions must be discussed by any church committed to being a church for all people. What is the source of genuine unity? What does it mean to be committed to truth?

Truth

Jesus claimed to be truth, and life, and the (only) way (John 14:6). In his Gethsemane prayer, he acknowledged that the word of God is truth, and thus the only power for holiness (John 17:17). Have you noted that sometimes contemporary commitments to truth are divorced from any emphasis on Jesus? Certainly, the Bible is truth, but that is not exactly

what Jesus was saying in John 17:17. Can one really know truth without knowing Jesus? What does it mean to know Jesus? What does it mean to follow Jesus, and thus to follow truth?

Discussion Questions

Note: Discussing shared values, or understandings of those values, is never an easy thing. Seek God's guidance in prayer, seek his wisdom and seek his unifying Spirit as the class works through these discussion questions.

What does it mean to say that we value something? How would you define a value?

Read John 8: 12-32. When Jesus said knowing the truth is the only path to true freedom, what was he saying?

We often talk today about "the faith." What is the difference between "the faith" and "faith"? What are the connecting points?

In what ways are "the truth" and "the faith" referring to the same thing? In what ways are these two phrases different in their emphasis?

Why do truth and unity exist in tension? What is an appropriate balance between truth and unity? Can one ever fully have both? If your answer is no, does that suggest that the Restoration Plea is flawed?

Read John 17:17 (and note the larger context). What do you think Jesus was saying when he affirmed the connection between the word of God and truth? What 'word of God' was he talking about?

Read John 14:6 (and the context). Given that Jesus is the Truth, how does one value truth? Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Valuing truth requires that we walk in and share the story of Jesus."

What is biblical teaching? What are some of the characteristics of biblical teaching? Have you ever experience teaching that was 'biblical' but not relevant? Can such really be 'biblical'?

Discuss this statement: biblical teaching provides the foundations that guide Christians in worship, discipleship, relationships, and life.

Read 2 Tim. 2:14-19. How does this text reflect Paul's commitment and Timothy's responsibility to guide the Ephesian church in biblical teaching? Who is an approved worker?

Paul wrote to Timothy about sound or healthy teaching (2 Tim. 1:13). How do you define this phrase? Can doctrine be sound if it is not healthy? Can doctrine be healthy if it is not sound?

The identifiers we will discuss in this "values" series are approved workers, brothers, ambassadors, disciples, family, and servants. Which of these have we emphasized the most? Which have been emphasized less? What impact has this had on our self-understandings?

Which of these is your favorite? What other descriptions do we use? Which other descriptions do you like the most?

Notes			

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