

THE CHURCH: WHO? WHAT? WHY? HOW? - Calvary Values (1,2)

Oct. 15, 2017 – Pastor Randy

Our identity is expressed through 5 key elements: Beliefs, Values, Mission, Vision, and Strategy. Here is how each of these relates to one another:

Our Beliefs about WHAT is true, inform...

Our Values about WHAT is important.

Our Mission -WHAT we do- is motivated and guided by our beliefs and values.

(Our beliefs and values communicate the "WHY" behind the mission)

Our Vision of WHO we will become inspires the mission.

Our Strategy communicates HOW we will accomplish our mission.

Over the next four weeks I am going to speak to you about our core values. I have communicated our mission: To build a community of followers of Jesus who are committed to continually learning, living, and sharing the good news of Jesus. Last week I communicated a vision of what we can become: A maturing and multiplying generationally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse community of Christ followers where everyone encounters God personally, connects with others relationally, and contributes faithfully to the growth of the church. Today I want to begin to review our core values with you. These values ought to convey the culture of our church. They shape and guide the everything we do as a church. Today we are going to look at the importance of being biblically faithful and spiritually passionate.

I want to begin with "spiritually passionate" although it is second on the list

1. **Spiritually Passionate**

"We seek to love God in vibrant worship, passionate and Holy Spirit empowered prayer, and with obedient and generous giving of our lives and resources to love and serve others in His name."

To say that we value being spiritually passionate is to communicate that we value an authentic love for God which is expressed through:

A. **Vibrant praise and prayer.**

Authentic love for God is evidenced by heart-felt expressions of adoration and appreciation. Our belief in the greatness of God and the amazing grace he has poured out on us by saving us from our sin, reconciling us through adoption so that we might live as His sons and daughters, ought to excite

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us! We need to respect the fact that we all have different personalities. Some of us are very excitable and tend to be more verbal and expressive than others. Some of us are more reserved and quiet. We ought all to feel our appreciation for Jesus deeply, even though we won't all share it as loudly. What ought to be present is enthusiasm and excitement. If they are missing there is a disconnect between what the truth it professes and the reality it projects. We have good news!!! We need to live like we have good news!! If next Saturday everyone in this church received \$1 million, what would next Sunday's worship look and sound like? What we have in Christ is more valuable than \$1 billion.

When value a love for God, rooted in our belief in God's greatness and grace, that stirs our emotions without degenerating into mindless emotionalism. We value spiritual passion, not spiritual emotionalism. Emotionalism is emotion that either,
a) Is not in response to revelation from God, or
b) Is not followed by devotion to God.

B. Enthusiastic obedience to God and generous service to others.

Spiritual passion is not only expressed through verbal adoration and appreciation towards God, but also in enthusiastic and generous service to others. In Titus 2:11-14 Paul wrote,
For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

We are "spiritually passionate" because we have been "touched deeply" by the wonderful love and grace of God in Christ and we "care deeply" about God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

Zeal for God is good. It is vital. It is important. But....zeal is not enough. It needs to run on the track of truth. Listen to what Paul wrote in Rom. 10.

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Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God. - Romans 10:1-4

In this passage, Paul is lamenting the fact that his fellow Jews had a passion for God, but still in need of salvation because their passion was not accompanied by truth. While trying to justify themselves through the law they were missing out on the true means of justification; faith in Jesus Christ. Being well-intentioned is not enough? There are a lot of well-intentioned people. Paul was very well-intentioned when he was persecuting Christians. In his ignorance he mistook children of God for God's enemies. The men who took down the world trade towers were passionate about doing God's will. Jesus warned us that many people would do evil in God's name! Truth matters. Paul was torn up inside, because he loved his fellow countrymen but they were misdirected. The ESV reads, *"they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."*

We need a zeal for God accompanied by the truth about God. Therefore, we value being faithful to the truth of God as revealed through the Bible.

2. Biblically Faithful

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right." - 2 Timothy 3:16

We believe that The Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, are inspired of God. The belief in the inspiration of the Bible is another way of saying that God is the ultimate author of scripture. Consequently, we also believe that the Bible is infallible and our authoritative rule of faith and conduct. If God

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inspired the human authors of scripture, then our response should be to trust scripture as truth and to accept it as authoritative. To say that the Bible is infallible means that it does not fail to communicate truth to us. It is completely trustworthy in all that it reveals. Accepting it as authoritative means that we submit our lives to its revelation and instruction.

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a collection of many diverse historical documents. Written on three continents over a period of 1500 years by over 40 authors from very diverse backgrounds. The diversity of the documents that make up the Bible as to their age, author, and genre contributes to our belief that this is not just a special collection of writings, but a truly sacred collection of writings.

Belief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible begins with its witness to itself. The documents that make up the bible testify to their inspired character. They declare to be the revelation of God. Jesus believed the OT to be revelation from God. A skeptic might respond, "Why should I believe that the bible is the Word of God just because its authors say it is?" No one is suggesting you should believe that the Bible is inspired *simply* because it claims to be. In our judicial system we rely on witnesses to establish for us what is true. Witnesses are examined as to their credibility and when credibility is established we place our trust in the witness to be revealing truth to us. The Bible has stood up against intense scrutiny concerning its historical reliability and credibility. We have good reason to place our trust that it is inspired by God and therefore, authoritative in our lives.

There are several lines of external evidence that point to the divine inspiration of the Bible. I am just scratching the surface. If I don't scratch your itch of curiosity enough, I have included some resources for your study.

1. Archaeological Evidence

"There have been more than 25,000 archaeological digs related directly to the subject matter of the bible and not one of them has contradicted anything that we have in the bible. The overwhelming majority of them have affirmed and confirmed the things we find in the bible." - Voddie Baucham

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2. Documentary Evidence – One criticism that has been leveled against the reliability of scripture, is that since the Bible has been written over such a long history, and since we no longer have the original manuscripts, it is unlikely that we have an uncorrupted version of the original. That criticism backfires on the critic because it actually highlights one of the strongest evidences of the Bibles' historical reliability; the high level of agreement among the thousands of biblical manuscripts we possess serves to confirm the historical accuracy of the full biblical text.

Dr. Ravi Zacharias summarized it this way: "In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the documents, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity."

3. Prophetic Evidence – The fact that the Bible consists of a library of books written over the course of 1500 years has provided us with an amazing record of many prophecies and their fulfillment in history. The number and specific nature of these fulfilled prophecies in the Bible is unparalleled and cannot be explained away as mere coincidence.

4. The Evidence of Divine Cohesiveness

One of the truly amazing things about the Bible is how a vast collection of writings composed over a period of 1500 years by about 40 authors from a wide diversity of cultures and backgrounds could produce a singularly cohesive unit that tells one story from beginning to end, centered on one person, the person of Jesus. William Scroggie in his work, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* (pgs 30-31) expressed it this way:

"No more convincingly are the unity and progress of the Biblical revelation demonstrated than in the fact that Christ dominates the whole...In the Old Testament Christ is predicted; in the Gospels He is present; in the Acts he is proclaimed; and in Revelation He is predominant. Christ is the focus of all history, prophesy and type. Divine revelation converges in him in the Old Testament and emerges from Him in the New Testament. "

5. The Evidence of Divine Preservation

Bernard Ramm, commenting on attempts by modern man to discredit and do

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away with the Bible wrote, “A thousand times over, the death knell of the bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put!” Voltaire boasted Christianity would be extinct within 100 years. Fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible society used his printing press to produce stacks of bibles.

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1947 the oldest manuscript we possessed of the OT was from about 900 AD. Among the Dead Sea scrolls a complete manuscript of Isaiah was discovered dated from around 125 BC. According to Josh McDowell in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (pg. 58), when comparing Isaiah 53 in the Isaiah scroll with the Masoretic text from around 930 AD there is only one word in question – which has no bearing on the meaning of the passage. This means that after 1,000 years Isaiah 53 was preserved with an extraordinary degree of exactness. The chances of a document being preserved so accurately while being copied over a period of 1000 years staggers the imagination...unless God had been superintending the process!

Here is what God preserved for us so we could read it today:

Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. Isaiah 53:4-6

We need passion and knowledge; zeal that is motivated by truth.

Biblical faithfulness begins with the belief that it is the inspired by God and therefore, trustworthy and authoritative. Because the Bible is the Word of God, we ought to place a high priority on studying it in order to acquire an accurate understand of its meaning and an equally high priority on applying that meaning to our lives. Being faithful to God's word means:

1. We ought to commit ourselves to study the Bible in order to understand the intended meaning of the divine and human authors.

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We must make it our objective to hear what it is saying rather than what we want it to say. None of us appreciate when people twist or distort our words. If we deserve the respect of not having our words twisted and misinterpreted, how much more careful should we be to not twist or distort God's word. Paul warned Timothy that a time would come when people would not pay attention to sound doctrine but would be drawn to teachers that would "tickle their ears". All of us should begin by humbling ourselves and admitting that we are inclined to hear what we want to hear. Once we are honest with ourselves about that propensity, we can take steps to guard against it. At the end of the notes you will find a great resource to help you understand the Bible. For now, I want to leave with you the most important principle of proper biblical interpretation. Pay attention to context. Most misinterpretations of scripture are due to a simple failure to pay attention to context. That includes the literary, cultural, and historical context. Beware of the "fortune cookie" approach to reading the Bible! We are a culture that loves the witty sound bite, but scripture is not a random compilation of inspiring sound bites. The failure to hear or read words in their proper context can lead to serious problems. For example, what does the statement, "Give that person a hand" mean? It all depends on the context. If the person in question is carrying a heavy load you would interpret those words as encouragement to help carry the person's load. If the person has just performed a beautiful piece on the piano, you would interpret those words as encouragement to respond with applause. If your response in the first situation is to applaud you might find yourself with a black eye!

2. We ought to commit ourselves to applying the meaning to our lives. We have not been faithful to scripture just because we have been faithful to interpret its meaning accurately. Faithfulness also requires that we give it the respect it deserves, allowing the intended message to exercise authority in our lives. This involves inviting scripture to shape our attitudes and affections. It involves making decisions that bring our actions into alignment with the teaching of scripture. Being faithful to scripture means being not only hearers of the word but doers of the word. We need to be people who have a zeal for God that aligns with the truth revealed by God through the Bible.

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Our desire for truth and commitment to truth must be undergirded with a spirit of humility. If not, it will quickly degenerate into an arrogant self-righteous, graceless, judgmental, overly critical spirit.

If you have passion without the Word, you blow up. If you have the Word without the passion, you dry up. If you have both the Word and the passion of the Spirit, you will grow up.

Resources:

[Taking God at His Word](#) by Kevin DeYoung

[Why I believe the Bible](#) (Audio on Youtube) by Voddie Baucham

[BeThinking.org](#) – This website provides a host of articles providing answers to critics of the Bible and Christianity.

[How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth](#) by Gordon Fee

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