

Mostly Personal...

Loved Ones,

As we work through our series *First at Antioch* over the next few weeks, I'd like to dig a little deeper concerning our Core Values. As I mentioned in my last letter, there are nine irreducible, non-negotiable values, and today we'll look at the first two.

1. Biblical Authority - We believe God is speaking to us through the Scriptures. Therefore, the Bible is our ultimate authority concerning all of life's issues.

The foremost Core Value of Christian Life centers on the idea of what forms our world-view and the understanding of what it means to have an "absolute authority" by which we live. As early as the days of the Judges, the people of God went astray whenever the accepted behavior became based on some sort of opinion poll or a misguided sense of majority rule. That tragic era was described in Scripture as a time when "every man did what was right in his own eyes."

If mankind doesn't have an absolute authority, the result is a morally drifting society, which will surely change over time. One of two extremes will result. Either a majority will impose its unfiltered will on everyone (usually with a loss of justice and freedom), or there will be no consensus from which we frame life (with chaos reigning supreme).

We believe the Christian world-view is one shaped by the proper understanding of Scripture and wise application of its precepts. Therefore our quest is for a true interpretation of Scripture as well as contemporary application of the sacred principles. We believe the Bible is both timely and timeless. Therefore in all matters, the important questions are:

- A. *What does the Scripture say?*
- B. *What does it mean?*
- C. *How do we live it out today?*

2. Intimacy with God - We believe God desires an intimate relationship with every believer. Through consistent prayer, meditation, worship, and Bible study, we can pursue and achieve intimacy with the Father.

When we speak of experiencing intimacy with God, we affirm that everyone can have a living, vital relationship with our Creator. We do not place our faith in a distant deity who merely wound up the universe like a clock and then placed us on a cosmic shelf to wind down. When Jesus came to earth as a baby, He was called *Immanuel*, which means *God is with us*. It has always been a central tenet of Christianity that God desires to have a personal relationship with humanity. We are assured in Scripture that He is both approachable and loving.

God approaches us on one level through conscience and creation (Romans 1, 2; Psalm 19). On a much deeper level He approaches us through His

written Word, the Bible. The writer of Hebrews says the ultimate revelation of God is through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3). Additionally, God reaches out to us by the direct drawing and witness of the Holy Spirit (John 16, 17; Romans 8).

In response to His drawing, we approach Him through the various means of grace He has provided. Among these is prayer, Bible study, and Christian meditation. All of these are enhanced through Christian fellowship we enjoy as we gather for the purpose of worship. None of these practices secure salvation for us; we know that is a gift provided by grace and through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9). However, each of these spiritual disciplines is a significant determinant of how meaningful and significant our relationship to our Heavenly Father can be.

The bottom line of these first two Core Values is this: God is speaking to us and drawing us to Himself. Our response, along with His grace and mercy, will largely determine the level and quality of our lives for Him!

Looking ahead: weekly we'll discuss our remaining Core Values.

- 3. God's Empowering Presence** - We believe that through God's Empowering Presence lives are transformed. Therefore, we welcome Him in every aspect of Christian Life, acknowledging our dependence on His grace-filled presence.
- 4. Pastors who are Servant Leaders** - We believe in God-ordained leaders who model the Christian life and devote themselves to the care of the church family. The responsibility for the church rests upon their shoulders.
- 5. Partners In Ministry** - We believe there are ministry opportunities for every member of the Christian Life Family. Ministry involvement will be in accordance to the person's spiritual gifts as well as present needs within the church family.
- 6. Authentic Community** - We believe accountability, care, and a sense of belonging are critical to balance and progress in our spiritual journey. These three things are best achieved within the context of a small group of relationally connected believers.
- 7. Intentional Apprenticing** - We believe the key to the success of "Building Godly Generations" is intentional apprenticing. Every experienced follower of Christ is responsible for passing along to others the knowledge, skills and opportunities for service that God, through others, entrusted to them.
- 8. Relational Evangelism** - We believe all Christ-followers have the responsibility of intentionally sharing the Gospel within their network of relationships.
- 9. Culturally Relevant Environment** - We believe our role is to convey eternal truth by creating a variety of environments that are relevant to every generation and conducive to the work of the Holy Spirit.

I love you all, *Pastor Stephen*