

Title: What Do We Value?

Text: Joshua 4:21-24

Date: January 22, 2012

Place: DCOG

Theme: Unleashing Our Potential

Resource: "Here Today, There Tomorrow" by Gary McIntosh

Gary McIntosh writes, "One cannot have a real vision for the future without a sense of history. The past is a record of the values that should propel us into the future. As we move toward the future, it is important that we look back to discover the values that give meaning to our ministries, then move forward by building on our values to take hold of new opportunities."

* Our nation, for instance, had a value-based beginning. Look at these words right out of the Declaration of Independence..."We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

I don't think for a moment that any of us want to go back and live in the past. We enjoy electricity, running water, flushing toilets, computers and cell phones. But the core values are extremely important to us.

1. All of us should have equality in court, in taxation, and in racial issues.
2. Our God has granted us some inalienable rights (rights that are incapable of surrender or transfer).
3. We have a right to life.
4. We have a right to experience freedom.
5. We have a right to pursue happiness.

For many years these rights governed our choices and guided us our decisions.

McIntosh goes on to say, “If looking at our history promotes a Band-Aid mentality of survival—an effort to hold the church together by looking to the good old days for affirmation—then looking back is counterproductive. When a church looks to the past for its sense of pride, it will dwell too much on past successes. Yet, when a church looks to the past to discover its values, it can be a powerful link to the future. The past is for remembering, not reliving.”

Joshua 4:21-24

He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, 'What do these stones mean?' 22 tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' 23 For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. 24 He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

The Lord knew that it was crucial for Israel to understand the values of the past in order to design a new future.

Another verse that points us the right direction...

Psalm 22:30-31 (The Living Bible)

“Our children too shall serve him, for they shall hear from us about the wonders of the Lord; generations yet unborn shall hear of all the miracles he did for us.”

We discover our core values by looking into our past.

* Kiyoko Takeda, a professor at International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan says, “Recognizing what we have done in the past is recognition of ourselves. By conducting a dialogue with our past, we are searching how to go forward.”

This should also bring to light inappropriate and unintentional values. Such as...

- All ideas will be measured by the phrase, “We’ve never done it that way before.”
- As long as we’re right, we don’t have to be loving.
- Our highest priority is to keep our existing members happy, comfortable and coming back.
- Compromising enough to please everyone is more important than accomplishing the clear vision God has given this congregation.
- Our music style is the most important thing in this church.

We must guard against unrealistic interpretations.

*A cartoon had the apostle Paul just finishing his letter to the Corinthians, and he bemoans the fact that while he addressed problems such as gluttony, party spirit, incest, and other issues, someday people will look back on it all as the “good old days.”

Eccles. 7:10 (NASB)

Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.

* The good old days were never as good as we think they were. Could it be that the only reason we think the past was so good is that as we grow older, the number of things that annoy us increases.

- * Remember that it was in the “good old days” that...
 1. Women were not allowed to vote
 2. Our young men were drafted into the Armed Services
 3. Prohibition was enacted and then repealed
 4. Children had very little protection against abuse
 5. A job loss often meant leaving your family behind (desertion)
 6. World Wars were fought
 7. A church service consisted in 3 hymns, offering, a prayer, a sermon, and 12 verses of “Just As I Am.” (sometimes profitable and sometimes an emotional manipulation with results that did not last)

The values of the church are what hold the vision together. As we seek to move forward using new methods and ministries, the values keep us tied to our roots.

I. Core values are enduring, no-compromise principles that will guide how we do ministry in the pursuit of our mission and vision.

* We all have values. (Marriage, Kids, Finances, Recreational time, and Doctrinal beliefs)

- A. In the strategic planning process we are focusing on the core values of our church related to how we will do ministry together.
- B. What are the core values that most effectively describe the principles we want to guide our decisions, priorities and behaviors?

1. God is our source and Jesus is His Son

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

* He is my creator, Lord, Savior, resource, encourager and friend. I will trust Him in all policy decisions, ministry choices, financial conclusions, personnel selections, and vision casting.

REAL OR ASPIRATIONAL? – Do you trust God in this way or only say that it should be true?

* Matt Woodley writes; Eighteen years ago my friend Andy and his wife traveled to a South American country to complete their adoption of a little girl. At the time this country was gripped by corruption, violence, and political chaos. After Andy arrived, they (that is, anyone who could profit from Andy's plight) kept upping the price for the adoption. When he finally threatened to take the matter to the U.S. consulate, a mysterious figure confronted Andy, warning him of vague but dreadful consequences. It was like a spy thriller, except it was Andy who was caught in the middle of some sinister, dangerous plot.

But he refused to leave without his daughter. The odd thing was that Andy had never even met this girl. She was small and helpless. She hadn't won any awards or aced any tests. He didn't know that one day her smile would light up their living room, or that she'd love their cats and dogs, or that she'd play Mozart pieces on the family piano. For all practical purposes, she was just an orphan condemned to a life of grinding poverty in a far-flung developing country. But for some crazy reason, Andy stayed there, negotiating with corrupt officials, spending oodles of money, squandering time, and even risking his life to find and win this little girl.

Now, eighteen years later, Andy was telling me about an intimate high school graduation party for Maria, his adopted daughter. At one point during the meal, Maria unexpectedly stood up and gave a beautiful speech thanking everyone who had helped her find a better life on Long Island.

As Andy told me this story, he was trying to fight back the tears. I got the impression that he could have lived a hundred more years, or even a hundred lifetimes, and nothing would compare to hearing Maria's spontaneous thank-you. And it all started when Andy walked into that dangerous nightmare in an attempt to bring her home.

When he finished telling me this story, it struck me that Andy, my non-Christian friend, had discovered the heart of the gospel: God's loving, daring, persistent pursuit of people like you and me. Like Maria, there's nothing we can do to earn God's love, but he still loves us. And he doesn't want to leave us behind. Instead, in the presence of Jesus, God walked into the "dangerous nightmare" of human sin and pain in order to save us and bring us back home.

2. The Bible is our rule of faith

* What this means is that what the Bible says, not just the cover and pages, serves as our guide for living. The Holy Scriptures set boundaries, encourage faithful living, teach eternal truths, and challenge our choice of relationships.

REAL OR ASPIRATIONAL? – Most of us would say that the Bible is true but do we live like it?

* About ten years ago Ben Patterson told the story of a retired pastor who began noticing that his former congregation was sliding away from orthodoxy. The pastor saw this as his fault, noting the one thing he thought he did most poorly as a pastor. The pastor stated, in two sentences, his great failure as a pastor: "I always told people what to

believe. My great mistake is that I never clearly taught my people what NOT to believe."

2 Tim. 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

3. We value relationships

* We are in the people business. Friendship and fellowship are very important to us and guide our decisions. (People and process not products and programs)

Real or Aspirational? – How important are people to us? Are we willing to give up some time each week to invest in others? Will we financially sacrifice to help someone that we do not know very well?

* The film ¹²⁷ Hours tells the true story of then 27-year-old Aron Ralston. In 2003, while hiking in Blue John Canyon in Utah, Ralston was trapped by a chockstone that pinned his right arm to one wall of a crevice. After surviving for five days on 500 ml of water and exhausting all other options, he fashioned a homemade tourniquet and with a blunt pocket tool cut off his arm and stumbled out of the canyon to find help.

At one level, this film sounds like just another gory action movie, but more deeply, this film explores what it means to love. At the beginning of the film, Aron barrels into the canyon, music blaring in his headphones. He arrives there after ignoring phone calls from his mom and sister and brushing aside his boss' queries about where he was headed. Ralston acts like a completely self-centered loner, incessantly snapping pictures of himself and flirting with girls he meets on the trail. Clearly, Ralston doesn't need or want anyone else in his life.

But by the end of the film, he's motivated to fight for his life by a memory of his ex-girlfriend looking at him with a mixture of pain and pity and saying, "You're going to be so lonely, Aron." At the time, he wanted the loneliness, savoring freedom from entanglements. But remembering her love and thinking about the possibility of starting a family provides the motivation to pull out his pocket knife. He realizes he's made a terrible mistake by isolating himself, and he wants another chance to live differently. So he cuts off his arm and escapes to freedom.

Near the end of the film, when Aron has made it out of the canyon and is on the trail with his severed arm, he sees some other hikers a little way ahead. Barely audible at first he says, "Help me." Then, bellowing hoarsely, he cries out, "Please Help Me!" The hikers hear him, and turn around puzzled. Then, seeing what's happened, they come running.

It's when Aron asks for help that the film reaches its climax. "Please help me" is itself a form of "I love you." The two cries belong together. Ralston's vulnerability, his plea for rescue, is what leads him back into the arms of his family, back into relationships with people, back to love.

John 13:34

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

4. Growing in Christ is expected

* After receiving Christ as our Savior, we are convinced that God expects a lifestyle of discipleship. Thus, our children, youth, and adults are encouraged to learn, practice, become proficient, and then teach others.

Real or Aspirational? – While we say that spiritual growth is vital it would appear that way to many are satisfied to remain at a comfortable level for all their lives. In other words, growth is good...but it is for the other guy.

* In his book [The Social Animal](#), David Brooks writes:

In 1997 Gary McPherson studied 157 randomly selected children as they picked out and learned a musical instrument. Some went on to become fine musicians and some faltered. McPherson searched for the traits that separated those who progressed from those who did not. IQ was not a good predictor. Neither were aural sensitivity, math skills, income, or a sense of rhythm. The best single predictor was a question McPherson asked the students before they even selected their instruments: How long do you think you will play? The students who planned to play for a short time did not become very proficient. The students who planned to play for a few years had modest success. But there were some children who said, in effect: "I want to be a musician. I'm going to play my whole life." Those children soared.

Growing Christians approach discipleship with a similar attitude: "I want to follow Jesus (or love others, or study God's Word, or build up the church). I'm going to follow Jesus my whole life." Those Christians may stumble often, but over the long haul they will also soar.

2 Peter 3:18a

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

Conclusion: What are your core values? Not just what you say they are but what you believe down in your heart. What would you be willing to die for? What are you willing to live for?