

**We do what's right, because it is what love requires.**

Mission Statement

We exist to help people be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did.

Name

Definition Church

Core Values

We see redemptive potential in every moment.

We do whatever it takes to pursue our God-given potential.

Today we're going to talk about the final core value.

Before I get into that - I want to explain some key different types of values.

Aspirational

Pay-to-play

Core

To come up with these core values we asked who are the staff and partners in our church who most embody who we are and what is it about them that makes that true.

That's where these values came from.

Our final core value is a morality core value, a value that grounds the other two values and sets guardrails for our beliefs and behavior. So here it is:

**We do what's right, because it is what love requires.**

As Pastor Allen mentioned a few weeks ago, the philosophy of moral relativism is growing and we have a responsibility as a church to stand for what is right, because we love God and we love people. We will offer God's definition of truth, love and justice and we will strive to live that out and guide others to do the same.

As strong and important as this core value is, it requires some explanation because what is right and what is love are often debated topics in today's world. In church, we talk a lot about love, family, relationships, but we'll have to bring some definition to all of this in order to live it.

This matters immensely because our understanding of love also affects our understanding of God.

1 John 4:8

8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:16-17

16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. 17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

The greek Word used for love in all of these examples is agape and I'm going to talk more about this in a few minutes. But God is in his very nature, this kind of love. He is humble, sacrificial, in his essence a desire to bless and be a blessing to others and none of that dependent on who we are or what we've done. It's who He is.

If we don't know what love is, we don't know God. If we're going to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did, this is going to have a lot do with love.

In Scripture there is often a direct correlation between love and obeying the commands of God, doing the right thing. There is a direct connection between doing what is right and what is loving. That's why these two ideas are connected in our core value.

John 14:15

15 "If you love me, obey[a] my commandments.

John 14:21

21 Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."

This was so important to Jesus that he went as far as to say loving God was the most important of all the Old Testament laws.

Matthew 22:36-40

36 "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"  
37 Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.'[a] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is

equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'<sup>[b]</sup> 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

This was actually an expansion of an Old Testament law, which only referred to our love for God.

Deuteronomy 6:5 - This was taken from the Old Testament

The rest of the New Testament expounds upon this.

**Romans 13:8**

8 Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.

But not only is there this connection between doing what is right and love, there's a purpose to it. It is what separates followers of Christ from the rest of the world. It's what makes us salt of the earth and light of the world like the Bible describes.

**John 13:35**

35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

**1 John 3:10**

10 So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers<sup>[a]</sup> does not belong to God.

The problem is we then have to define love. Because in our culture today, there are many definitions and ideas of what love is.

Often we're accused as believers, leaders and the church as whole of being unloving because of what we are for or what we are against. Is that true or not?

One of the issues is that in the English language there is only a single word for love: love.

We say things like I love my wife and I love my car and I love Fall and I love white chocolate chip cookies, and I love Thanksgiving. And some of us may mean the same thing, but most of us don't. We mean something very different when we use the word love in all these different contexts.

However, in Greek there are several words that reflect different views on one's relationship with another. I've mentioned one of these already, but there are 4 primary words for love - 3 of which are used in the New Testament

### **Phileo - fill-ee-ah**

Definition: The love between friends - a strong bond between people who share common values, interests, or activities.

CS Lewis describes it as "the least biological, organic, instinctive, gregarious and necessary... the least natural of loves."

Example: True friendship - like between David and Jonathan in the Bible.

Frequency used: Found throughout the New Testament

Bible verse: 1 Peter 3:8 - "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind."

### **Storge - store-gay**

Definition: A natural affection between kinfolk/ those brought together with a common bond.

Example: The natural love of a child for his or her parent.

Frequency used: Uncommon - storge is only used a handful of times in the Bible, usually as part of a compound word.

Bible verse: Romans 12:10 - "Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor"

### **Eros - air-ohs**

Definition: Often used to express sexual love or the feelings of arousal that are shared between people who are physically attracted to one another.

Example: Think chemistry. This idea is described all through the Book of Song of Solomon and was created by God like the other types of love.

Frequency used: Not found in the New Testament because in the ancient world the world associated with this type of love had become so debased that it was not used in the Bible.

Bible verse: N/A

Often when the world talks about love, it means some combination of these three loves. Primarily what we feel and experience.

### **Agape -**

Definition: The love that serves regardless of changing circumstances. Unconditional love. Often described as the greatest of loves, it doesn't so much refer to a love rooted in attraction, as moral good will. It is not a 'cold' religious love, but it is truly altruistic.

Example: Loving someone that you know you will get nothing back from. It is the love that God has for us, and that we are compelled to have for him, ourselves and our neighbor.

Frequency used: Found throughout the New Testament.

Bible Verse: John 3:16 - 16 "For this is how God loved the world: He gave<sup>[a]</sup> his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

So if we are commanded to do what's right, and doing what is right is agape love (remember the whole law can be summed up by agape love for God and others), we must take a closer look at how God defines agape love.

### **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**

1 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it;<sup>[a]</sup> but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

### **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Here are some practical steps you can take.

You can use these as you are trying to learn how to live right and love well.

## 1. Start with the Bible

Just as God is love. He is also His Word. John 1:1. The Bible does not just contain truth, it is truth. So any time we make a decision, as individuals or as a church we start with the Bible.

Corporate: Preach and teach on the whole Bible. Race, homosexuality, tithing, other controversial topics. If the Bible talks about these things, we must as well. It's not unloving to do this, it's right and love requires us to do what is right.

Individual: Marriage/Divorce, pornography, living together before your married.

### 2 Timothy 3:16

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.

When you're trying to determine what to do and how to interact with others, always start with the Bible. If it is black and white, we're doing to do our best to live that out and to challenge you to do the same thing. If you meet with me as a pastor and ask my opinion, I am often going to tell you I don't have one, let's look and see what God thinks and what the Bible says about your circumstances. We will start with the Bible.

## 2. Consider others better than yourselves

When the Bible doesn't give a clear command in a situation, we should ask the question, what would most benefit those involved? What would lift others up, what would help them succeed? Most importantly, what would point them to Jesus?

Corporate: Not defending ourselves publicly when it would hurt others

Social Media - look at me, my opinion matters the most, my life matters the most.

### Philippians 2:1-8

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6

Though he was God,[a] he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges[b]; he took the humble position of a slave[c] and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,[d] 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Ask some simple questions. What would it be like to be in their situation? How will my decisions or actions impact others? How do I be a blessing to others rather than promoting myself?

### 3. Show grace in every moment

There will be many times when we are making decisions as a church and you are making decisions as individuals where we do not have a clear answer. We have to show each other grace as we learn and grow together.

Corporate: In person services and Covid guidelines. There is no perfect situation.

Individual: How do you respond to someone who you disagree with or who has hurt you?

Luke 6:35-36

35 "Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. 36 You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

Next time you're tempted to judge someone's decision, I want you to remember the weight that comes from making decisions, the weight that comes from leadership (whether that's leading yourself, a church, a state or nation). I want you to remember that no one is perfect and that at some point others will have an opportunity to judge your decisions. I want you to choose compassion, mercy, over judgement. When we do this, we are doing what Jesus did!

1 John 4:19

19 We love each other[a] because he loved us first.

Romans 5:8

8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.