

Living the Commitment

Our Family Values:

2 Timothy 4:1-8

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Have you attended a wedding recently? They are fun. Sometimes, you look at the couple and see starry eyes. You look over at the bride and groom's mothers, and you see something in their eye too. It's like they're thinking, "You have no idea what you are getting into!" What if the vows were given in this manner? (See wedding skit)

It is one thing to make a commitment; it is another thing to live the commitment! Since early May we've discussed what critical, core values shall guide the Bethany family. I, your pastor, and your church council have committed ourselves to live them out at Bethany, but how do we live that commitment?

First, we need to know them. In your bulletin is a bookmark with the values. Please take and use the bookmark. You will find your eyes at times reading a value. God will prompt you. If we are to live our commitment, we need to know what we are committed to.

At the close of 2 Timothy, we read what appears to be some of Paul's last instructions to his trusted friend and protégé. Paul says his death is near, that he has finished his fight. He requests Timothy to come be with him, but we don't know if that happened. We do know that Paul's chief concern was that Timothy help believers live their commitment. He writes:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:2-4, NIV)

Paul called Timothy to certain actions because the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. The truth will be too difficult, too costly; it will demand more effort than people are willing to give. Folks will look for teachers who make them feel good as they pursue their own desires (corrupted by the world).

Living the commitment to Christ and these values he has given us goes against the grain. It requires effort, energy and ingenuity. Therefore, Timothy was to preach the word, in season and out of season, when it's fashionable and when it's unfashionable, when the culture honors it and when the culture ridicules it, when you are seen as thoughtful and when you are seen as extreme and unthinking. We will proclaim Christ and these values, which he has given us, regardless of your reaction... because you need to know them.

Second, we need to evaluate our behavior by them. Paul told Timothy to correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. You cannot do that unless you are evaluating and measuring our behavior in view of these truths. To do that, we have to call these truths to mind and consider their applications. Let's for a moment do that.

Our first core value is:

Experiencing Salvation: *We value Jesus Christ alone as Savior and Lord and His works that restore us to intimacy with God and creates a new life of obedience in the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5-6)*

If you assert there are many ways to heaven, your idea won't be supported here. It may bring comfort, but it won't restore anyone to intimacy with God or create a new life of obedience. No matter how much we admire one another, we have all been deceived by sin, all have become estranged from God, and all have hindered others in their relationship to God. Jesus is the door to intimacy with God and new life. He died for all and is the savior for all. Bethany exists to

help people be restored to intimacy with God and experience a new life of obedience in the Holy Spirit. This communion railing is a place devoted to repentance, prayer and salvation. Anyone at anytime, no matter what we are doing as a church, is welcome at this railing. It is an altar, a place to meet God and taste his love in the sacrifice of Christ. If you come during a final hymn or after the benediction, our prayer teams will help you take steps that restore intimacy and bring new life. We must organize our activities for you and those you invite to experience salvation.

Our second core value is:

Believing the Bible: *We value the Bible as God's authoritative Word, study it together, and build our lives on its truth. (2Timothy 3:16-17)*

Each value is not just a product of our walk with God's Spirit. They are also rooted in what God scripted for us in the Bible. The Scriptures measure and judge our actions. They cleanse our thinking from the toxins deceiving our world. Join us in reading the Scriptures each day. Read through the New Testament with us, just five chapters a week. Ask God to give you the hunger.

Our third core value is:

Praying: *We value prayer as the gift through which we communicate with God and through which God supplies our needs and accomplishes His will. (Matthew 7:7-11)*

Want your needs met? Pray! Want God's will accomplished? Pray! Pray alone! Pray with others! Fast and pray! Ask for vision? Ask for direction? Expect answers! Prayer is going to change your life and mine this next month. What is coming is amazing!

Our fourth core value is:

Worshipping God: *We value heartfelt worship that is God-honoring, Spirit-directed, and life-changing. (John 4:23-24, Psalm 100:1-5)*

Are you worshipping God with your heart today or just going through the motions? Is your life changing? I can't capture your heart for God. You must offer it to him.

Our fifth core value is:

Growing with One Another: *We value the fellowship and ministry of every believer, and an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual accountability, through which we develop our spiritual gifts, grow in servant leadership and unite in Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:15-16)*

Look around you. Everyone you see falls short in some way. Everyone is struggling and broken in some form. We do not hurt as a church because of their faults. We hurt when they withhold their God-given gifts from this family and when we judge their faults rather than help them. In the people you see, God has given us all the gifts necessary to transform this church and community for eternity.

Our sixth core value is:

Witnessing to the World: *We value our Holy Spirit-empowered identity as Christ's witnesses to all people. (Acts 1:8)*

We are Christ's witnesses wherever we are. Are we acting according to our identity?

Our seventh core value is:

Serving Compassionately: *We value serving others at their point of need, following the example of our Lord Jesus. (John 13:12-17, Matthew 25:34-40)*

Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many. Who knows whether you have been called just to this time, this situation and to this need? God makes the difference through you. Do you believe that? We serve and share out of what we've been given.

Our eighth core value is:

Pursuing Unity: *We value the complete unity of Christ's one Church and our part in it. (John 17:23, Ephesians 4:2-6)*

We will not isolate ourselves from other believers or churches that lift up Jesus. We may not agree with all, but we can love, share and fit together as God gives us wisdom.

Our ninth core value is:

Loving our Neighbor: *We value all relationships as God-given and our call to love one another. (John 13:34-35, 1 John 3:18)*

We can be offended by one another, but we can't stay offended. God has put us into relationship with others so that they experience from us honest, authentic, redemptive love.

Our tenth core value:

Blessing Families: *We value families (or households) as God's primary means of providing for, protecting and developing people. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Joshua 24:14-15)*

God designed us so that we are shaped by our home life. What influences your mind and heart at home? Your future is defined by it. How much is Christ and his body a part of your home life?

God is leading us to focus on these things. He is developing us with this understanding. We are being formed as his children with these values at the core of our life. We will conduct our Bethany family life committed to teach, correct, rebuke and encourage in accord with these values that Christ has given us.