

SLIDE 1

Our Church Values – Part 3

What we believe and Why it is Important?

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Introduction

What is your relationship with God like?

Is he “In the sky?” is He “Out there?”

Seriously, how would you characterize your relationship with God? Sadly a study by the Christian Barna group says we value our relationship with our earthly family more than our relationship with God?

SLIDE 2

A 2007 study by the Barna Group found that seven out of ten adults choose their earthly family over their heavenly Father when asked to choose the most important relationship to them. Of the 1,004 adults over the age of 18 that were surveyed:

- one-third said their entire nuclear family is more important than God.
- twenty-two percent named their spouse as the most important relationship in their lives.
- seventeen percent said their children were of chief importance.
- three percent identified their parents as the most important relationship in their lives.

Interestingly, when asked to identify the most important group or network in their life, 29 percent named their church.

"Study: God Relationship Not Most Important to Americans," www.christianpost.com; submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky

What explains this? Could it be we do view God as far off and distant, rather than as our Father, our Good Shepherd and our Counselor and Guide?

Today we want to take a look at our values, what we believe about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I think you will find the review important.

SLIDE 2

The statement of faith in our Constitution appropriately begins like this, will you read it with me?

Our belief about God the Father

6. GOD THE FATHER

We believe that salvation is an action by God which is rooted in the will, power, and glory of God the Father. The Father has initiated the salvation of all who will be saved by choosing us for Himself before creation, and drawing us to the Son by His grace, bringing many sons into glory. For those who thus trust in Christ, the Father has willed eternal safekeeping and fruit for His praise. Our relationship to the Father is now that of children in His family. Our purpose is to worship the Father and glorify Him by serving Jesus Christ. The Father's plan and ultimate purpose is that He will be glorified by all creation through out eternity. (Eph. 1:13-14; John 6:37, 44; Heb. 2:10; John 6:39-40; 15:8,16; Rom. 8:15-17; John 4:23, 24, 12:24-26; I Cor 15:24-28; Phil. 2:11; Rev. 5:13)

Look at that first line. Regardless of how you feel currently about your relationship with God, close, far, distant, here is the truth. God the Father feels close to you. He chose you.

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NASB95)

⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

How does it feel to be chosen?

Entertainer Garrison Keilor recalls the childhood pain of being chosen last for the baseball teams.

The captains are down to their last grudging choices: a slow kid for catcher, someone to stick out in right field where nobody hits it. They choose the last ones two at a time—"you and you"—because it makes no difference. And the remaining kids—the scrubs, the excess—they deal for us as handicaps. "If I take him, then you gotta take him," they say.

Sometimes I go as high as sixth, usually lower. But just once I'd like Darrel to pick me first and say, "Him! I want him! The skinny kid with the glasses and the black shoes. You, c'mon!" But I've never been chosen with much enthusiasm.

Did you ever think about the fact that you are so valuable to God he chose you early—with enthusiasm. "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Ephesians 1:4).

Van Morris, Shepherdsville, Kentucky; source: Robert Russell, The Southeast Christian Church Outlook (6-8-00), Louisville, Kentucky

Sometimes we rebel against this idea. That we were chosen. That we were preselected. We think "why us and not someone else?" But that is the clear testimony of the Bible. Remember this:

- God chose Abraham, and Abraham believed God.
- God chose Noah, and Noah believed God.
- God chose Moses, and Moses believed God.
- God chose David, and David believed God.

And God chose you. And he chose you for a purpose-to be on His team. Have you believed God? Have you believed this truth about you? And you were chosen without "trying out." It was grace by which you were selected. By Grace you were saved.

The Movie, Miracle dramatizes the true story of the 1980 US Olympic hockey team. Not only did they surprise the world by defeating the Russians, they went on to win the gold medal at the Lake Placid games. The story orbits around the team's coach Herb Brooks and his commitment to release the potential in the young men he mentors.

With a proven record as the University of Minnesota's hockey coach, Herb (Kurt Russell) is selected to recruit and coach the Olympic team. During the summer of 1979 amateur hockey players from throughout the nation are invited to fly to Colorado Springs for a week-long try-out. But after only the first day of observing the wannabes, Herb identifies the 26 players he wants on his team. While those selected are ecstatic, those cut are sent packing.

Herb is seen walking towards his car in the parking lot of the National Hockey Center. Just as he is about to get in, Walter, the chairman of the committee that recruited Herb, flags him down.

"Herb! Herb! Hold on a minute," Walter shouts.

"Hey Walter," Herb replies. "How we doing?"

"I think we've got a problem here, Herb."

"What's that?"

"I've got a room full of people up there who want to have a say in the process, and you've already picked the team." (Walter points to the administrative offices)

"Look, Walter," Herb counters while staring at the man who hired him without a smile.

"No, no," Walter protests. "Now there's a right way to do this kind of thing, and this is not it."

"I know you've got a job to do, and if I was in your shoes I'd probably be saying the same thing."

"All right, then. Let's go upstairs. We'll help piece together a hockey team... all of us together."

"Walter, that's just not going to happen," Herb answers defiantly.

"Do you realize what the A.H.A. went through to put this thing together? The best amateur players in the country on the ice for a week, not just a day."

"I didn't ask for that, because I already know my team."

"How do you know your team? Those kids haven't been on the ice for what? Maybe a couple hours?"

"Walter, every one of those boys was chosen for a specific reason," Herb insists emphatically. "I've studied film on each and every one of those boys. I've seen them. I've watched them. And I've coached a lot of them. And the ones I haven't I've spoken with their coaches and scouts in the area. Now, I know best what I need to compete and the team I've chosen is it."

Content: Rated PG

Play it from 16:11-17:22

Is it that too much to believe, when the Bible says it is true, that God chose you?

But he didn't just choose you so you could put on the Jersey. He chose you so you could play on the team, and give him glory in everything you were designed to do.

Now we get to a truth in Scripture that I rely upon.

John 15:15

¹⁶ "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*"

Our life goal on God's team is to give him glory. To serve him and accomplish his purposes on earth. Not to tell him I want this or that part. But to take the part he has chosen for us and to excel at giving him glory.

Jamie Scott tried out for the play at his elementary school. He had his heart set on being one of the main characters, but his mother feared he would not be chosen. On the day the parts were awarded to the children, Jamie's mother and a friend went to pick him up, just in case he was terribly disappointed.

When Jamie saw his mother, he rushed up to her, his eyes shining with pride and excitement, and said, "Guess what, Mom. I've been chosen to clap and cheer."

Anonymous from the Internet; submitted by Brad Estep, St. Petersburg, Florida

You have been chosen to clap and cheer for God working through you? That changes everything doesn't it? How are you doing?

Now let's look at our #7th value. Our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our Belief about God the Son, will you join me in reading it aloud?

7. GOD THE SON

We believe that Jesus Christ, being truly God and co-equal with the Father, was begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, becoming truly man. The Lord Jesus lived sinlessly on this earth and gave to fallen man a visible representation of the

invisible God. He was crucified for our sins as a substitutionary sacrifice, and all who believe in Him are declared to be righteous on the basis of His shed blood. (John 1:1-3, 14, 10:30; Luke 1:26-28; Heb. 4:15; Col. 1:15; I Cor 15:3; Rom. 3:21-26, 5:9)

There is another key Scriptural truth which can give us draw near to God.

Jesus Christ was 100% God John 1:1-3, but also 100% man.

He was born of an earthly mother just like we were. Luke 1:26)

He had flesh just like we do.

He was tempted just like we are, (Matthew 4) but he did not sin.

That means nothing we can bring to him is new, he has experience what we have from the inside out. It is not longer an excuse, "Well, you just don't know how tough it is down here God." He does, he came down here. He breathed. He bled. He died.

And yet he faced it without sin.

Hebrews 4:15 (NASB95)

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.

You have trouble with sin? Of course you do. We all do. We are all much less loving that we want to be. We are all harder on others than we are on ourselves.

So we can draw near to Jesus as we are, because he has been where we are. He knows what we are facing.

But even more significant. He died for us. In our place. The wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ.

Question. Are you going to die for yourself and your sins. Or are you going to accept Jesus Christ as your sacrifice and turn you life over to him and serve him as Lord.

That is the choice. Die yourself, or live for him. Face death not knowing? Of Face life believing Christ died for our sins and rose for our resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:3-5 (NASB95)

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

What Scripture says is that he took our place. He was our substitute.

But he didn't just go and leave. He went and sent.

John 16:7 (NASB95)

⁷“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

This “helper” Jesus speaks of is the third person of the trinity. God the Holy Spirit. Join me in reading your eighth value.

8. *GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT*

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the agent of God's salvation, bringing conviction to men and illuminating them to an understanding of the Gospel. He regenerates those who believe in Christ, imparting to them a new divine nature, making them sons in the family of God. Simultaneous to this new birth, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells every believer, sealing him until the day of his final redemption. He also baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ, equipping them with spiritual gifts for mutual edification. The abiding presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit is the basis for His continuing work in the believer's life, as He desires to control, guide, and teach the believer, producing the fruit of the Spirit and good works. (John 16:8-13; Titus 3:5-8; John 3:5-6,16; II Cor. 5:17; II Pet. 1:14; Rom. 8:9,14,17; I Cor. 6:19; Eph. 4:30; I Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 1:3; John 14:16,17; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 22-23)

There is so much the Holy Spirit does, and in it is not the purpose of this overview of our values to go into depth on each aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry. But let us focus on this last line of our statement of faith.

God in the person of the Holy Spirit indwells each believer. God's gift of himself to every believer, not based on an act of the will, but an act of faith of the heart.

He is our counselor and guide. He guides us into all truth and enables us to succeed in living for Christ here on earth.

The most important piece of “equipment” is an experienced hunter who knows the area. Nothing compares.

Jesus has given us such a guide.

Bob, my father-in-law, hunts deer every fall in the mountains of north-central California. A number of farmers and ranchers in the area are willing to let individuals or small groups hunt on their property—if the hunters ask permission and show respect for the land. My father-in-law is one of the most congenial men I've ever met. It would take a surpassingly cranky landowner to turn him down.

Last year he approached a rancher and asked him if he might drive through a certain gate and do some hunting in the evening. When shadows lengthen and the October sun slips low in the west, deer begin to venture forth from their hiding places to graze.

The rancher gave Bob a thoughtful look and said, "Yeah, you can come on the land. But you'd better let me ride with you in the truck for awhile. Want to show you some things."

Now, I can imagine most men thinking, Oh, come on! Show me some things? Why do I need a passenger? Either let me in or tell me to stay out. I know how to drive, and I know how to hunt. I'm a big boy, and I don't need a chaperone!

Bob, however, being the man he is, cheerfully assented, and the pair drove through the gate onto the ranch. They had been skimming across a wide, seemingly featureless field when the rancher suddenly said, "You'd better start slowing down."

Why? Had he seen a deer? Bob pulled his foot off the accelerator. But why stop? As far as he could see, there were no creeks, gullies, or fences. Just a wide pasture stretching out to the dusky foothills.

"Okay," said the rancher. "You'd better park right here. Want to show you something."

Bob did as he was told. They got out of the truck in the cool, mountain air and began walking. Then the rancher put his hand on Bob's shoulder and said, "Look up ahead."

My father-in-law walked slowly forward and then stopped dead in his tracks. Cleaving at right angles across their path—and across the pasture as far as he could see in both directions—was a yawning, black tear in the surface of the earth. Where they stood, the crack was probably 30 feet across. Peering over the edge, the hair on Bob's neck bristled.

Where was the bottom?

The sheer, rock-ribbed sides of the great volcanic fissure plunged to unknown depths. Cold, still air seemed to exhale from the blackness below....

Walking back to the truck, Bob marveled at how difficult it was to see the fissure from just yards away....

Bob smiled to himself. Having a guide wasn't such a bad thing! He gained a new appreciation for a man who knew the terrain—and where to park the truck.

Bonne Steffen; source: Larry Libby, No Matter What, No Matter Where (WaterBrook Press, 2000), pp. 5-6

Every human being naturally thinks we know better. We resist being Guided. But when we invite Jesus to be our savior, he gives us a counselor and guide.

Conclusion

This is why it is so important to know what you believe and why. God has chosen us. Jesus had died and rose for us. And now if we will invite him into our lives, he will guide and lead us. Want to fall into a hole? Just Ignore these truths.