



parkerHill
COMMUNITY CHURCH

VALUES

“helping people find the way back to God”

The Value of Values

What are values?

Values are guiding principles. Like DNA, they are what give every church its' unique personality. Values, like the wind, are invisible. But underlying every decision a church makes is a set of values which affect the climate of a congregation.

Every church has a set of values - whether they are spoken or unspoken. Parker Hill's are descriptive (a statement of reality) and prescriptive (an identity we are pursuing).

What is the relationship between a church's mission and its' values?

Parker Hill's mission - helping people find the way back to God - describes what we do. Our values shape how we go about fulfilling that mission.

If we were in the restaurant business, our *mission* statement could look something like this: "To provide excellent food and service to customers." Our *values* would determine how we go about fulfilling that mission. All of the following restaurants strive "to provide excellent food and service to customers." The values are what make each restaurant unique.

Burger King Domino's Starbucks Olive Garden

What happens when values are defined and stated?

When values are defined and stated, there is enhanced unity - especially among leadership and staff.

When values are defined and stated, there can be a greater focus of time, energy, and passion.

When values are defined and stated, decision-making is easier.

When values are defined and stated, people have a better sense of where (or whether) they fit in the organization.

Grace Makes All the Difference

One word separates Christianity from every other belief system. That word is **grace**. We are forgiven, cleansed, and accepted because of God's grace, not by virtue of our own goodness. As recipients of God's amazing grace, we seek to be a community of God's people who are known for their grace. We accept others as they are and love them enough to help them become everything God wants them to be.

Grace is unique to the Christian message

The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law - each of these offers a different way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.

- Philip Yancey, **What's So Amazing About Grace?**

Grace is the essence of our salvation

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

...God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. (2 Timothy 1:8-9)

Grace should be a primary trait of Christians

*Recently, I have been asking a question of strangers - for example, seatmates on an airplane - when I strike up a conversation: "When I say the words 'Evangelical Christian' what comes to mind?" In reply, mostly I hear political descriptions: of strident pro-life activists, or gay-rights opponents, or proposals for censoring the Internet. I hear references to the Moral Majority, an organization disbanded years ago. Not once - not once - have I heard a description redolent of grace. Apparently that is not the aroma Christians give off in the world. - Philip Yancey, **What's So***

Amazing About Grace?

Grace should affect the way we relate to each other, as well as how we respond to people with a less-than-perfect past. It should influence the way we talk about other believers or churches. Grace should guide us as we engage with our family members, neighbors, and friends who are not yet believers.

We Invest and Invite

The transition from unbelief to faith in Christ is almost always a process of questioning, dialogue, and discovery, eventually leading to belief. Our role is simply to partner with the Holy Spirit in that process. As individual believers, we draw other people to Christ by making relational investments such as time, compassion, and conversation. At the same time, we invite seekers to continue their search through involvement in our life together as a church. As we invest and invite, we play our part in the unseen process of helping people find the way back to God.

Why do we need to invest?

We need to *invest* because of what we know about human nature.

We usually make significant, life-changing decisions only after a process of thinking, dialogue, and investigation. In addition, we accept advice more readily from trusted friends, not total strangers.

We need to *invest* because of what the Bible says about the process of evangelism.

The Apostle Paul explains the common Biblical metaphor - sowing and reaping - in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8: I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

Is it really OK to invite? or Isn't church supposed to be just for believers?

We should *invite* because of how much more the church and the individual believer can accomplish in partnership.

Believers are responsible for leveraging their relational influence for the sake of the kingdom of God...Far more personal evangelism takes place if believers feel the freedom to invite their unbelieving friends to church. It is easier to invite people to an event than it is to confront them about their personal belief system. It is easier to include them in something you are excited about than it is to convince them that their entire world-view is incorrect. - Andy Stanley, **Can We Do That?**

We should *invite* because it mirrors the pattern of the early church.

The apostles taught in public places that were accessible to seekers. In Jerusalem, the believers met together at The Temple on Solomon's porch. Paul and his companions proclaimed the Gospel in the town synagogues. In Athens, Paul reasoned in the marketplace, and spoke on Mars Hill.

Small Groups Are a Big Deal

We believe that God has designed spiritual formation to happen best in the context of Christian relationships. We seek to cultivate a church where authentic, biblical community is the experience of every attendee. Therefore, our entire ministry program is built around small groups of believers who learn together, pray together, and encourage one another toward spiritual maturity. We are a church of small groups, not just a church with small groups.

We value small groups because of what we know about the nature of God

God exists as Trinity - He is three in person, but one in essence. God, therefore, set the pattern for community from the very beginning of time. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed that his followers would emulate the community found within the Godhead. (John 17:20-23)

We value small groups because of what we know about the New Testament pattern

Jesus selected twelve men from among his disciples and invited them to join Him in a three-year, life-transforming, personal journey. The men in Jesus' small group literally changed the world.

The three thousand people who responded to the Gospel message on the Day of Pentecost participated in two types of meetings: they met in the temple courts to hear the teaching of the apostles, and they met in homes for fellowship and encouragement. (Acts 2:42-47)

We value small groups because of what we know about the biblical role of the Pastor

Ephesians 4:11-12 says that God ...gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. According to Paul, the role of pastors is not to do the work of the ministry, but to prepare others to do the work of the ministry. Our small groups are the primary venue for care and "shepherding".

We value small groups because of what we know about the biblical role of church members

There are 47 different "one another" commands in the New Testament, including the commands to encourage one another, care for one another, admonish one another, and serve one another.

Playing it Safe is Dangerous

Jesus is described as the Word of God made flesh. Through Jesus, God chose to come and live among us, reaching out to even the most irreligious people of his day. The spiritual leaders in Jesus' world stood apart from their culture and expressed disdain for others who were less "religious" than they. Jesus, however, immersed Himself in that same culture, demonstrating grace and redeeming even the worst people. We believe that the church should do what Jesus did – connect the people of our own culture with the timeless message of Jesus. We value innovation, creativity, and flexibility in order to be culturally relevant while remaining doctrinally pure.

What did Jesus do?

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1-2)

*The Pharisees had an ethic of avoidance, and Jesus had an ethic of involvement. The Pharisees' question was not "How can I glorify God?" It was "How can I avoid bringing disgrace to God?" This degenerated into a concern not with God, but with self - with image, reputation, procedure. They didn't ask, "How can I make others clean?" They asked, "How can I keep myself from getting dirty?" They did not seek to rescue sinners, only to avoid sinning. The tragedy is that we have often preferred the ethic of the Pharisee to the ethic of Christ. - Mark Buchanan, **Your God Is Too Safe***

What did Jesus say?

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)

*We fear, of course, the risks: that we will not overcome the world, but succumb to it. And the risks are indeed there...If anything, an ethic that sends us out into the world, with all its dangers, toils and snares, makes us more prayerful and prepared. It makes us more God hungry and God dependent. - Mark Buchanan, **Your God Is Too Safe***

We Seek Transformation, Not Just Information

God wants every part of our lives to be changed. His Word (the Bible) is our foundation, our compass, and a catalyst for the change He desires. Life-change happens when our hearts are awakened, our minds are transformed, and our actions mirror Christ's. Our primary goal is not only to impart information, but to teach the Bible with relevance and practicality so that lasting transformation will result.

Information alone will never change your life

Jesus closed his Sermon on the Mount by saying that the key to a real spiritual growth is found in living by what He taught, not just hearing it. (Matthew 7:24-27)

*Jesus didn't just teach principles; He taught practices. He gave people something to do. He didn't just teach them about forgiveness; He told them to forgive their debtors. He didn't just talk about love as a concept; he told people to love their enemies. He didn't just tell people to think about changing their behaviors; He told them to repent (change their actions). Sure, it's challenging, but it doesn't take a weekend seminar to understand what He means. - Jim Henderson, **Jim and Casper Go to Church***

God doesn't measure our spiritual maturity by what we know

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22-25)

The most convincing argument for the Gospel will be the lives of those who believe it

In his letter to Titus, Paul reminds first-century believers that their words and actions will either support or undermine the credibility of their faith. He encourages them to live in such a way that no one will malign the word of God (2:5), that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us (2:8), and that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive (2:10).

We Pray Hard, We Work Hard

Trying to effectively serve without diligent prayer can be playing God. On the other hand, praying without dedicated, consistent stewardship of abilities and resources can be ungrateful presumption. We work as if it depends on us and pray with the awareness that it depends on God.

God's work is almost always accomplished through his empowerment of human effort

Some very significant events have resulted from the combination of human effort and divine empowerment. After being freed from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites set out for the land that God had promised to them. Soon they were attacked by a tribe called the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-15). Moses adopted a unique battle strategy. He put a young man with no battle experience (Joshua) in charge of the army, while he went to the top of a nearby hill. On that hill, Moses lifted his hands toward heaven – a symbol of his dependence on God. As long as Moses kept his hands in the air, the Israelite army prevailed. When his arms grew tired and began to fall, the Amalekite army prevailed. Aaron and Hur came alongside Moses to support him as his arms grew tired. The courage of the soldiers intersected with Moses' prayer of dependence, giving the people a clear picture of God's ability to protect them.

At the inception of the church, prayer was a priority for believers

The Book of Acts describes the birth and growth of the church in the days immediately following the ascension of Christ. Acts 2:42 describes the lives of those believers: *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Verse 47 describes the impact of their faith on the people of their city: ...the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

We are fighting a spiritual battle, requiring spiritual weapons

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand... pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:12-18)

We Do More by Doing Less

We believe that it is better to focus on a few key ministries and do them well, rather than attempting to do many things adequately. We say “no” to many, many good things so that we can say “yes” to the most essential things.

Is more always better?

One would think that the more programs and the more special events offered, the greater the impact. Our research has confirmed that the opposite is true. Unfortunately, the big and expanding menus are not producing vibrant churches. In fact, the large menu approach to ministry is killing our churches. The appropriate response: Stay focused on your simple process. Say no to everything else. - Thomas S. Rainer & Eric Geiger, **Simple Church**

Jesus did not allow the needs of the crowds to determine his schedule. He often pulled away from the crowds to refresh Himself spiritually (Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12, John 6:15) and he bypassed many people with legitimate needs in the course of his earthly ministry.

Focus creates impact

Water moving through a narrow gorge creates a fast-moving river, full of power and potential. Water moving across an open plain creates a swamp. Light that is diffused through frosted glass provides some light, while light that is focused in a laser beam can cut through steel. When energy and motion are focused in a specific direction, the impact is much greater. The same is true in ministry. Greater focus results in greater impact. - Thomas S. Rainer & Eric Geiger, **Simple Church**

By narrowing the focus, a church can excel in a few key areas of ministry, rather than trying to do many things without doing them well.

Without attention, things naturally drift away from focus and toward disorder

We never have to be intentional about disorder - it just happens over time. Think about your family schedule, your garage, the glove box in your car or the top drawer of your desk. Disorder happens naturally, focus requires discipline and difficult choices.

In John 15, Jesus described our relationship with him by using the metaphor of the vine. In verse 2, He says that *every branch that bears fruit, He [God] prunes, so that it will be even more fruitful.* Just as pruning removes living shoots for the sake of greater fruit, we must be willing to remove things from our lives and our ministries that are acceptable, but not essential.

We Are Crew Members, Not Passengers

One of the most powerful New Testament metaphors used to describe the church is the picture of the human body. Our human bodies can only be fully healthy when every part is functioning according to its design. In the same way, our church can only be healthy when every person who is part of our “body” is functioning according to their design. Therefore, we are committed to helping all regular attenders find a place of service where their unique gifts and abilities can be best utilized. We facilitate this by intentionally developing emerging leaders and providing hands-on opportunities for learning. Our schedule is designed so that our weekend ministries are supported by the strategy of “worship at one - serve at one,” and we expect all regular attenders to spend at least as much time serving in a ministry as attending a worship gathering.

Serving and giving were the essence of Jesus' ministry.

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45) If we are truly his followers, then serving and giving should be defining habits of our lives.

Every believer has something to offer

Every believer has a unique mix of gifts, abilities and life experiences, and, because of that, can serve God's Kingdom in a way that no one else can. When a believer is not serving, the rest of the body is poorer. *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)*

As we engage people in serving, they grow

A body of water that has no outlet soon becomes stagnant. Water which has both a source and outlet remains fresh and pure. The same is true spiritually. Believers who receive but never give can easily grow stagnant and stale in their faith. There is a joy and spiritual refreshment that comes when we serve others. *A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:25)*

Serving God is the appropriate response to His grace

Our salvation was purchased at the cost of the blood of Christ. We don't serve God out of guilt, fear or duty, but simply because it is one small way of saying “thank you” for the new life we have been given.

His Best Deserves our Best

The God of our salvation gave the best He had to offer – his Son. The only reasonable response is for us to give our best to Him. We believe that enthusiasm and excellence should permeate every ministry of Parker Hill Community Church because God is worthy of our best efforts.

When believers carry out their mission with passion and commitment, they make a compelling statement to others about the importance of the Gospel. We pursue excellence for very different reasons than a corporation, an athlete or a craftsman. We are motivated by a drive to glorify God, to please the Savior, and to do our best in his power for his sake. In other words, our pursuit of excellence must be theologically and biblically driven.

By giving our best, we give God the honor He deserves

The Old Testament prophet Malachi had some very strong words for the people of Israel when they were giving God the leftovers of their lives. Speaking through Malachi, God said these words to his people: *When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? says the LORD Almighty. (Malachi 1:8)*

By giving our best, we validate our message

If we want people outside the church to take our message seriously, then they must see that we take it seriously. We demonstrate a passion for the Gospel is by giving attention to the way we live and the way we carry out our ministry.

In his book *A Call to Excellence*, Gary Inrig writes these words: *Christians bear a high and holy responsibility - to serve in the world as ambassadors of Christ. Because we represent Him, what we are reflects on Him. Unbelievers form their opinions of God from what they see in us. We may wish this were not the case, but it is, and therefore we Christians must live lives worthy of our Lord. This necessarily involves a commitment to excellence, since our God is excellent. God's purpose is to take our God-given potential and bring it into reality as we live for His glory. That being the case, there is no room for mediocrity or apathy.*

By giving our best, we reciprocate God's grace

Our freedom from guilt and condemnation was made possible by the offering of a perfect sacrifice. The only appropriate response to this gift is to give the best of our time and effort as an act of worshipful gratitude.

MISSION*

Parker Hill is all about “helping people find *the way* back to God”

CRITICAL PURSUITS*

We emphasize and program for these in order to assist our people in growing and changing:



(You:God)

We *Immerse* ourselves in worship and in the teaching of God’s truth in our worship gatherings.



(You:Others)

We *Fuse* our lives together through learning, sharing and praying in a small group.



(You:the Mission)

We *Radiate* God’s grace and advance His Mission by serving.

**Presented in our weekend services September 8-9, 2007. Parker Hill’s Values were presented September 15-16, 2007. These may be ordered through Recap 3350 or listened to on-line.*