

The Values of River's Edge

Introduction.

Walk into any home today and you'll find a set of values in that family. Values passed down by the parents to the rest of the members of the household. God designed the home to be a small-scale version of his church which he also likens to a family. Since the family of Christ is universal, no single body of believers can exclusively represent the clearest picture of his church. Each church can only reflect a part of the universal family in the same way each member of the human body reflects its unique function to contribute to the whole. If we could see what God sees, we'd see all his congregations throughout the world combined to make up the whole of the body of Christ. So each church, with its unique personality, will reflect a set of its own values. Below are some of the main values of River's Edge—doing our part, in our assigned field, to contribute to the whole body of Christ worldwide.

- A. We value Jesus.** He is our primary focus and what River's Edge is all about—knowing Him, loving Him, obeying Him, and trusting Him to help us find grace through the difficulties of life.
- B. We value worship.** All that we have comes from the Father. We worship Him in word and deed. We gather to minister to God in our praise and worship and to be drawn into His presence.
- C. We value prayer.** We believe that both personal and corporate prayers are essential for a successful life and church. Jesus said that God's house (the church) would be called a "house of prayer." Prayer is the life-line and conduit for his power and kingdom to be manifested to the world. It is what keeps the Christian fresh in his/her faith, grace, love, peace, power, and joy.
- D. We value the truth of the Bible.** The Bible is God's Word to the world. It is a compilation of sixty-six books penned by forty authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is without any mixture of error in the original manuscripts. It is *the* Book whereby all other books, ideologies, philosophies, and religions must be measured.
- E. We value sound doctrine.** We stand on the *absolutes* of the Scripture which provide teachings on the nature of God and his kingdom purposes, as well as clear principles for godly living. It is our responsibility to equip and empower the believer with a thorough grasp of scriptures and the tools to rightly and accurately handle God's Word through the preaching and teaching of the *whole* gospel.
- F. We value the "supernatural" ministry of the Holy Spirit.** We believe that the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 are as much for today as they were in the early church. We desire to grow and mature in the use and practice of these gifts for the encouragement and edification of the believers (1 Corinthians 12:7) as well as to manifest the *supernatural* Kingdom of God to the world.
- G. We value grace.** Grace is a free gift we receive without earning it or deserving it. Such is the grace God has bestowed on us through salvation. Every good thing in our lives is the result of God's grace. Grace is the desire and power God puts in us to do his will. Grace is received through humility and is what we depend on daily. Grace generates patience, forgiveness, and forbearing with one another in love.
- H. We value family.** Strong families make strong churches. The family today is under assault and must be protected with a biblical worldview and the encouragement to live the Christian faith where it really counts—in our homes. Your wife is your sister in Christ, your husband is your brother in Christ, and your children provide the opportunity to shape dynamic saints who will become the legacy of your life. We want to empower and equip our families to be strong and withstand the relentless tides of erosion in today's society.

- I. We value relationship.** If we attend church as a detached spectator, we cannot be a true member. In our natural bodies, our hand is involved with our arm, our feet with our legs; all parts are connected and involved with whatever the head directs the members of the body to do. It is the same with the church. One cannot be attached to the Head—Jesus—without being actively involved in the lives of his family members. “Audience” saints can never reach their full potential in God unless they allow themselves to become vulnerable and accountable in relationships, for better or for worse.
- J. We value love for one another.** Love *for* each other—demonstrated *toward* each other—is the only thing that will get the world’s attention. It is the single most important attitude and motivation behind all that we do for God. It is what Jesus commanded us to do, just as he has loved us (John 13:34). The opposite of love is hate—something God said would be the telling sign of the absence of his presence in our lives (1 John 4:20-21).
- K. We value “partnership” to reach the lost.** The lost, the hurting, the distressed, the lonely...they all matter to God. For God so loved the world He sacrificed his Son for them. Because people matter this much to God, they matter to us. Therefore, we have an assignment in God to reach beyond our Sunday services into the community around us—into the spheres of our workplace, our friends & relatives, and our neighborhood (Matthew 28:19-20). To be a church that makes a difference requires a commitment and “partnership” to reach the lost. On Sundays we come to worship God and learn from his Word. However, our duty doesn’t end there. We have been called to wisely *invade* our spheres of influence, be faithful witnesses, and proactively find new disciples to bring into the domain of our King, Jesus.
- L. We value servanthood—every member ministering to every member.** Jesus said that the greatest among us would be the one who serves (Mark 10:41-45). This is why God has equipped each saint with particular gifts and talents to serve in the church (Romans 12:3-8). We encourage everyone to proactively discover his or her gifts and place to serve at River’s Edge, no matter how small or obscure. More than members of an audience, we are “partners in ministry”—everyone pulling their weight for the greater good.
- M. We value unity.** Jesus said, “A house divided cannot stand.” One of the deadliest schemes of the enemy is to divide and conquer God’s people. Churches that divide and split are the result of pride, envy, and self-centeredness—all fed by misunderstandings, unresolved conflicts, gossip, bad reports, and a lack of commitment to relationships. To deter discord requires integrity and character—the resolve to refuse a lending ear to gossip, and a willingness to go to an offending party for clarification (Matthew 18:15). Unity is a *commitment* to pursuing love and peace in our “partnership” and to expend our energies toward advancing the kingdom rather than attacking one another.
- N. We value “followership.”** In the western culture, independence and a “maverick” spirit is applauded and encouraged. However, total dependence is what God requires for those who follow him—i.e. dependence on his grace, his guidance, and his strength. Following God will extend to an *interdependent* relationship in the church. An interdependence that demonstrates respect and submission for each other (1 Peter 2:17, Ephesians 5:21) and those he places in authority (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- O. We value small groups.** The early church in Acts focused on two expressions of assembled life. They met in public places for their corporate gatherings (Acts 2:46), and they met in homes with smaller groups of believers (Acts 20:20). We refer to our home meetings as “Small Groups.” It is here that accountability, loving relationships, encouragement, and ministry provides the greatest benefit to the believer and an opportunity to walk out the values expressed in this lesson.
- P. We value “accountability.”** The early church enjoyed apostolic fathers through loving relationships. Apostles provided spiritual blessing, accountability, and protection from false teachings. They were the first appointed office to serve the church and its leaders (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16). We believe God is restoring the original pattern of apostles to the church. They serve as a gateway to kingdom authority and anointing on earth, from Christ [the head] to his body (Ps. 133). We, therefore, are in an apostolic relationship in a network of churches called *Vanguard Network International*.