

The Human Mind

The Discipline of Renewing It Daily

Session 6

1. Spiritual Core Values

When you ask someone what they value, they will usually respond with what they believe in.

What Spiritual Core Values do these Scriptures Emphasize?

- a. Colossians 2:6-7; 1 Timothy 4:6-10
- b. Romans 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18
- c. Romans 15:1-7

* As Christians, our Core Values are usually our intellectual or faith commitments because they are often theologically driven, e.g. Prayer, Humility, Evangelism, Godliness, Faith. These are faith concepts we believe in.

2. What Are My Deep Values?

However, if you examine a person's actual behaviour, we find there are other influences active that are shaping choices and behaviour. These are non-spiritual personal preferences and priorities we like and desire. And they are important to us. These are known as behavioural values. We are not as conscious of them, but they exert a tremendous impact on what we choose to do. **Most people are not fully aware of what motivates their actions – the deep, subconscious influences that sway their decisions. These are the deeper assumptions and preferences that show up as behaviour-shaping values.**

Behaviour values describe how we want to live, the qualities of living that resonate for us. Another way to describe values is the 'the sum of our preferences and priorities.'

- Preferences are what we want in our lives
- Priorities are how important that preference is in relations to another.

We have many values; but for them to be core they must represent what is most important to us. These deep, inner convictions influence every decision we make, acting as guides in the living out of our purpose.

Values answer questions like:

- What is most important to me, and why?
- How do I want to live?
- How do I want to be treated?
- How do I treat others?
- How do I make decisions?
- What do I really believe in, and what will I stand up for?

Values are expressions of what we find worthwhile. They underlie every decision and course of action in our lives. Values are abstract concepts that represent what is most important to us. For example; freedom, acceptance, security, family, respect, independence.

Deep Values and Emotions

Values are hard to put a finger on directly since they are conceptual, intangible and instinctive. They are hard to put into words – they just are; and we feel them in our gut.

Most people are not aware of these values and underling beliefs; however, we certainly feel the emotions that are triggered by them. WE understand their influence by the inner joy we have when we live in alignment with them or the dissonance we experience when we are living out of alignment or when people violate our values. *Emotions are a reliable indicator of underlining values and beliefs.*

Values act as boundaries for behaviour as we journey through life toward our purpose. They are safeguards to keep us from straying into disaster. God has placed emotions as indicators and alarm bells to alert us to these boundaries.

- Positive emotions like joy, confidence, and happiness indicate that we are living by our values and are on a path to fulfilling our purpose.
- Negative emotions like anxiety, anger, or sorrow warn us that a value is being violated or threatened.

Emotions are neither right nor wrong – they are simply indicators.

- When you feel an emotion, it is an invitation for you to become aware of what it is indicating
- When you see others acting with emotions, rather than reacting to their emotions, use it as an opportunity to discern what the emotions is indicating. It is an invitation for you to understand a person at a deeper level

Clarifying values is one of the first steps towards knowing yourself. One might think that at this point in our lives we would know ourselves and what motivates us, yet the reality is that often times:

- We do not know, or have not taken the time to identify our deep values, or
- We have simply adopted the values of others around us, or
- Life has overwhelmed us to the place where we have misplaced our deepest values.

How to Identify Values

Values are the principles and personal preferences that intrinsically inform and drive our lives. When we are clear on our values, we know who we are, what we want, and where we stand. They are ‘neutral,’ i.e., not good or bad; they simply are the way we prefer to live.

Where do Values come from?

If Values reveal the deepest motivations of our lives, where do they come from: The first place to look for values is in our personal life story.

- How were you raised?
- What was your religious tradition?
- What experiences shaped your thinking?
- What is innate in you?
- What circumstances are you in right now?

These and other questions like them help us to find the beginning places of our value development.

Reflection

As you think about your story, can you identify specific experiences that have shaped the way you think and how you behave?

How have these experiences helped define your deep values?

How to Differentiate Deep values from other Values

When identifying personal values, it is necessary to distinguish ‘deep values’ from ‘what you value’. For example, most everyone would value ‘health’, but this does not necessarily mean that everyone has ‘health’ as a deep value. In order for ‘health’ to be a deep value, it is necessary that it is a consistent guiding principle for your decision making, and it shows up regularly in your actions (diet, exercise etc.)

Physical objects like money are not values in themselves. Rather they point to an underlying deep value such as security, freedom, or generosity.

Character qualities also must be distinguished from deep values. Few if any would suggest that honesty is not a vital quality for anyone’s character, yet honesty may not be a deep value. Simply listing character qualities that you desire is not sufficient to determine deep values.

Faith practices also do not automatically qualify as deep values. Most Christians’ value and practice prayer, spiritual reading, and evangelism, yet this does not mean that they are deep values. Rather they point to a larger value like “spirituality”.

The Challenge of ‘Ought’ Values

When considering our deep values, we often can get caught up into what we think we should value or what others have scripted for us. These are ‘ought’ values and many not represent who you really are or what you truly believe.

To help identify deep values from that which we think we ought to value, ask:

- What moves me most deeply?
- What do I most enjoy doing?
- Where do I find the greatest joy?
- What is it about this activity, idea, or person that brings me such a sense of life?

If the answers to these questions do not alight with what you are doing or what you believe in then you may be living more with ‘ought’ values than your true values.

Differentiating between the types of values

Aspirational: These are values we want to have, or think we ought to have. These are qualities you aspire to and endeavour to adopt. For Christians, these are usually spiritual in tone – good qualities you believe you should value, or qualities of others you admire.

Accidental: These are behavioural patterns that have simply happened over time. They came about unintentionally, but don’t necessarily serve your purpose well. These are often traits that we’ve inherited from our family or origin or the group we identify with.

Permission to Play: These are the minimal behavioural standards that are required to participate in a group. Honesty, integrity, respect are typical values that every group demands if you are going to be allowed to ‘play.’

Deep values: These are behavioural traits that are truly at your core. They are so much apart of you your being that you may not even notice – others do, though. You always act this way; you don’t have to try – it’s just natural. We usually have only a few – 3 to 5 – that we can say are truly foundational.

Can Values Change?

Any change in deep values is usually a slow process influenced by our choices over time and new circumstances in which we might find ourselves. Since deep values are designed to keep us grounded in what we truly believe, if they change it is imperative that we understand what is motivating the change in order to identify whether this is a desired change or simply drifting from what is core to us.

A crisis or deep pain can suddenly shift your core. This inner shift is a deep response to protect you from ever experiencing 'that' pain again. The danger is changing a deep value based on one bad experience. This is why painful experiences need to be carefully processed and not left to emotional reaction.

Articulating Your Deep Values

To identify deep values it is helpful to begin with a list, working that list down from many words to a few. The exercise requires us to take several passes through the list, grouping them into themes looking for primary values. The objective is to be able to identify your top five values. When you can articulate them clearly then you have them.

Write down your initial thought around what you think your deep values are. Use one-word descriptions.

Below is a list of words that describe values. This is simply a starting place. Feel free to add words of your own if they are not listed here. What is important is not what precise word you choose, but rather how you define that word. Mark the words that stand out as the most descriptive of your behaviour and what you believe in. Be careful not to mark words that you aspire to or feel you ought to have. The objective is to identify what is core to you not what you wish was core to you.

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|
| Accomplishment | creativity | generosity | intelligence | preservation | service |
| accountability | decisiveness | gentleness | intensity | privacy | simplicity |
| adventure | determination | gratitude | intensity | progress | stability |
| beauty | democracy | hard work | justice | punctuality | status |
| calm | discipline | happiness | kindness | recreation | strength |
| challenge | discovery | harmony | knowledge | reliability | success |
| collaboration | diversity | health | leadership | resourcefulness | teamwork |
| commitment | empathy | honour | loyalty | respect for others | tolerance |
| communication | enjoyment | improvement | meaning | responsibility | tradition |
| competence | equality | independence | oneness | results-orientated | trust |
| competition | excellence | individuality | openness | safety | truth |
| coordination | fairness | inner peace | order | security | unity |
| faith | innovation | peace | self-reliance | variety | |
| family | integrity | perfection | sensitivity | wealth | |
| freedom | personal-well-being | fun | growth | wisdom | |
| perseverance | pleasure | power | practicality | | |

After marking as many words as you think describe your values, group them into themes, looking for patterns. See if you can bring the list down to your top five values.

Analyzing Time for Values

For something to be a deep value it must be evidenced in our life. One way to validate values is to audit your activities to see where you are spending your time. In your spare time, what do you love to do? What do you naturally gravitate toward?

Be honest here – put down what is actual, not what you wish you were spending your time!

Weekly Activities –Time estimate in hours What is motivating this time commitment

| | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Career/work | _____ | _____ |
| Family | _____ | _____ |
| Spiritual Practices | _____ | _____ |
| Recreation | _____ | _____ |
| Education | _____ | _____ |
| Sleep | _____ | _____ |
| Volunteerism | _____ | _____ |
| Other | _____ | _____ |

Patterns You See

Possible under lying values

- _____
- _____
- _____

- _____
- _____
- _____

Analyzing Money for Values

- 1) How are you currently spending your money?
- 2) How we spend discretionary income can be an indication of underlying values. Audit your current spending patterns. If you received unexpected money what would you use it for and why?

How do you spend your money?

Why do you spend this amount?

| | | |
|------------|-------|-------|
| Home | _____ | _____ |
| Vehicles | _____ | _____ |
| Recreation | _____ | _____ |
| Education | _____ | _____ |
| Travel | _____ | _____ |
| Other | _____ | _____ |

Patterns of spending?

Possible underlying motivation, value

- _____
- _____
- _____

- _____
- _____
- _____

Analyzing Emotions for Values

Emotions are reliable indicators of what we believe is important. Both positive and negative emotions are flags for deep underlying values.

| Positive Emotions + | Negative Emotions – |
|---|---|
| Describe a time when you felt joyful, confident, energetic, or happy. | Describe a time when you felt anxious, sorrowful, stressed, angry or sad. |
| What were you doing? | What were you doing? |
| What value was being affirmed? | What value was being threatened? |

The Dark Side (Shadows) of Values

When a particular value is taken to an extreme, it can turn dark. There are times when the fulfillment that we receive from one value can be so intense that it moves from a value to a need.

Example: If your value is Responsibility, you will be motivated to be dependable and trustworthy. This value will be out of alignment when you move from the joy of being dependable to the stress of needing to be responsible to everyone and for everything, which then causes you to forfeit other values such as health. This is another example of the need to re-align a value.

We have an internal warning system of balancing value pairs to keep us on track:

Value Pairs

When identifying values, it is common to see words in your list that appear to be opposite: accomplishment vs. simplicity, responsibility vs. fun. Values have balancing opposites which act as boundaries to keep us from going to extremes. Anytime our behaviour goes too far to one side, a corresponding balancing value will begin to operate. It is important to understand the function of both in the pair.

Example: You have a value of working hard. You are reliable, diligent, and always get things done. You also have a value of family. If you go too far to one side, you begin to feel the tension of the other.

When Values Clash

Feeling our inward tension

Knowing our values helps us prioritize and solve the conflicts that come up in our daily lives in terms of what we will spend our time, money and energy on. We make decisions by assessing the priority of each value in our mix, deciding which ones can bend and which ones cannot. Understanding our internal values tension is important in making personal decisions.

Clashing values in Community Living

This becomes critical since everyone does not share the same values. Living in community is learning how to live with people who have different value emphases than us – and being respectful, curious and celebrating of

that difference. In conflict, we must be clear on whether what is at issues is a deep value (something we cannot bend on) or simply something we prefer.

Aligning Behaviour with Values

Upon reflection, we become aware that our actions are pointing to values that may need changing. By intentionally revisiting our personal beliefs, experiences and assumptions, we can make the necessary adjustments.

Prioritizing Values

While clarifying our top five values is an important exercise, it also points to the reality that we have more than these few values impacting our decisions and behaviours. There are many more underlying, lesser values rising to the surface as we daily make decisions, which is one reason why it is so difficult to identify deep values.

From time to time one or more values may take priority over other ones. For a season we may need to elevate one value over another in order to accomplish a task of circumstance of life. This does not mean that we no longer value what is being displaced. It simply shows an understanding that we do not and perhaps cannot live with all values at the same intensity all of the time. This fosters a sense of acceptance and respect that anything that is important to us is hard, requiring active commitment and acceptance of the challenges. What stays true is that we are committed to living according to our values.

Stress and Values

Our emotional responses are one of the best way to determine if our values are out of alignment. When values are not in alignment we experience stress within the various areas of our lives in which we demonstrate our values.

Stress within Roles

We experience stress when values we want fulfilled in certain roles are not being rewarded or acknowledged. For example, if those in authority over us, or when those in close relationship to us prevent us from fulfilling our values or expect us to spend time and energy on one value over another, then we experience stress. In such circumstances we can try to redefine our responsibilities in the role, develop other activities to allow for a particular value to be satisfied, or if necessary leave the environment.

Stress between Roles

If we attempt to express all of our values at the same level of intensity in all of our roles, we will experience stress. For example,

- As a new father, you may need to adjust downward your value of recreation that has been a prime value in time and energy prior to your becoming a father
- You have recently been promoted in your work which feeds your value of accomplishment of wealth. This new position takes time and energy away from your value of family. What is needed for you to be able to re-align these values to accommodate your new roles.

Linking Values

Values work together and support one another. Our greatest joy comes when our behavioural choices link one value to another. By linking values we can often move from the 'have to' to the 'want to'. For example, you may not be motivated by a value of health. But when you link that value to another value such as family, or relations or beauty, you can see the benefit of the lesser value by enhancing the others. The priority is to work to link lower values to deep values.

Integrated Living – Connecting Values to Purpose

If purpose answers the question of 'why we are there' and 'who we are', then values describe 'what is most important to us' as we live out our purpose. When we live according to our values, we are living an integrated life, which is a way of saying that we are living in alignment with who we really are.

What makes you most alive?

When we determine what that is, then we are well on our way to identifying what our unique purpose is which is more than what you want to be, it is what you were made to be.

Now summarize and flesh out your deep values below

- List our top 5 deep values
- Explain what that deep value means to you(Hint: the meaning will include any other words you linked in the group)
- Briefly give evidence how it showup in your behaviour.

1. Deep Value: _____

Description:

Evidence in your life:

2. Deep Value: _____

Description:

Evidence in your life:

3. Deep Value: _____

Description:

Evidence in your life:

4. Deep Value: _____

Description:

Evidence in your life:

5. Deep Value: _____

Description:

Evidence in your life: