

“FAMILY VALUES (#4): IDENTITY VALUES”

(1 Peter 2:9-10; Romans 15:7)

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[East Cobb U.M.C.; 3-25-07]

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1. Read Text: 1 Peter 2:9-10; Romans 15:7 Pray.
2. Since the first of March we've been sharing in a sermon series called "Family Values," where we've been using the 12 Core Values of *our* church as a *lens* through which to talk about how we're to live as Christians in today's world by practicing the "Values" of God's "family."
 - A--The nine Values you see printed in your bulletin (below the sermon title) are moral and behavioral standards that we as Christians are to aspire to live by – we're not perfect at them yet, but they're qualities we're continually striving towards.
 - B--Three of these relate us to God, three relate us to each other as individuals, and three more describe how we as God's "family" are to work and minister together as a community.
3. Today, we're using two scriptures (from 1 Peter 2 and Romans 15) to conclude this series with a discussion of three final Values that I believe capture the essence of WHO we are and WHAT we're to be about as members of God's "family" (hence today's title "*Identity Values*").
 - A--Of course, up to this point, each week I've talked about the meaning of each of these values by giving some simple definitions and examples of how they might look in our own church here at East Cobb UMC.
 - B--But today, I want to unpack these in very different way: after briefly introducing each value myself, I want to spend the majority of today's message inviting us to watch video interviews of some of our fellow church members, describing how they have learned to put these values into practice.

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4. The first "Identity Value" that should define us as Christians is... **MISSION.**¹
[Add Block #10 of "LGR" Cross & write in bulletin blank]

A--Verse 9 of the 2 Peter 2 scripture puts it this way: "*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people...*"

1--But notice it then tells WHY we are these things... "***in order that*** *you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*"

2--In other words, as Christians and as a church, we exist *not only* for ourselves, or our own comfort or convenience, but for others ("*in order that you might proclaim...*").

B—I want us to listen to two of our members share about the change that happened in *their lives* when they learned to focus *outward* on others, rather than just *inward* on themselves:
[SHOW DVD INTERVIEW of Pam Buzbee & Jonathan Mitchell, responding to the question “Describe the change that happened in you when you learned to focus outward on others, rather than inward on yourself.” (Time: 4:14)]

5. One way we can grow this first “Identity Value” (“*Mission*”) in our lives is to learn to practice a second one: **SERVICE** [Add Block #11 of “LGR” Cross & write in bulletin] – the notion that as Christians, you and I are called to *serve* others, rather than merely be served ourselves.

A—Over and over in his own life and teachings, Jesus demonstrated the importance of servanthood in the life of one of his followers.

B—Listen to two testimonials from fellow church members who’ve discovered how serving *others* can make a difference in *our* lives...

[SHOW DVD INTERVIEW of Judy Pollock & Charlotte Bentley, responding to the question: “Tell about your ministry, and how serving others through it has made a difference in your life.” (Time 2:11)]

C—Friends, if you want to learn how to focus outward more, try “serving” someone else through a ministry – not only will *they* be blessed, but it’ll change *your* life, as well.

6. Finally, if we’re to be in Mission and Service to our fellow humanity, it’ll also require the practice of one final “Identity Value” that I believe to be absolutely essential in the family of God: **ACCEPTANCE** [Add Final Block #12 of “LGR” Cross & write in bulletin]

A—The Romans 15 scripture (Vs. 7) challenges us to “*Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*”

1—In other words, as Jesus’ followers, one our tasks is to learn how to accept & value the differences among us, rather than seeing those differences as a negative.

2—Listen as two more church members share how being part of God’s family (the church) has helped them become more accepting of others...

[SHOW DVD INTERVIEW of Rickey Gasaway & Mark Mulling, responding to the question: “How has being part of God’s family (the church) helped you be more accepting of others?” (Time: 8:00)]

B—Those are powerful testimonies! So let me ask: How accepting are you towards others?

C—Of course, some of us may need help in learning how to be more intentional about accepting others, so let me let you hear about a new ministry called “Angel Buddies” that can offer just such an opportunity – watch and listen carefully...

[SHOW DVD INTERVIEW of Rev. Cindy Campbell responding to the question: “How does our new ministry ‘Angel Buddies’ help us as a church be more accepting of people with special needs?” (Time 1:03)]

-III-

7. Mission, Service, Acceptance – as a church and as God’s “family,” we’re not here for ourselves or for our own comfort.

A–Instead, we’re here to be in Mission to, to Serve, and to Accept others the way Christ did and does for us.

B–We may not be perfectly there yet, but my prayer (and God’s desire) is that these three Values more and more become the standards by which we identify ourselves.

8. [PRAYER]

9. [**HOLY COMMUNION:** I remind us that the very *way* we as United Methodist Christians practice Holy Communion is one way we seek to practice the value of “*acceptance*” = we welcome and invite *all* persons to come and receive from the Lord’s Table]

10. [HYMN: #585, “This Little Light of Mine”]

ENDNOTES:

1. “*Mission*” (singular) should not be confused with “*missionS*” (plural). The latter refers to the purpose and “reason for being” of something, whereas the latter usually refers to actions, ways, or works that enable that purpose/reason to be accomplished. In the case of a local church, for example, our “Mission” is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world around us. “*MissionS*” ministries (such as those carried out by our “Missions Ministry Team”) are examples of some ways to accomplish this by meeting the physical and materials needs of people.