

GOVERNING VALUES OF EBC

Most of you know that for the last few weeks we have been doing something different in our teaching times on Sunday mornings. Instead of expositing a specific passage of Scripture (which those of you who attend regularly know we are committed to doing), Pastor Grant and I are communicating on behalf of our elders about what God has been revealing to us about our church—specifically what we are all about and where He is leading us. As elders, we have spent quite a bit of time in the past few months seeking the Lord together and asking Him to reveal His intentions for us, which has led us to craft some statements of vision and mission for Emmanuel Bible Church.

Our vision is “That Christ would be seen by all.” That Christ would be seen by *us* as a church as we gather to worship, pray, and fellowship with one another. That Christ would be seen by our community as they encounter Him in us at school, at work, in the marketplace, in our community events and activities. That Christ would be seen by those who don’t yet know Him as we live and preach the Gospel both here and abroad. We know from Scripture that one day, when Jesus returns, Christ will literally be seen by all, but we want to prepare people for that day so that they can be on His side when He comes and joyfully receive their King.

Our mission is “to bring glory and pleasure to Christ Jesus by expressing His life, obeying His will, and advancing His kingdom.” Pastor Grant has spent the last three weeks carefully dissecting each of these phrases, showing us their biblical roots, why they are Jesus’ priorities for us, and what they look like as we practice them together.

My assignment from the elders for the next two weeks is to share with you the *values* that guide our decisions, that determine our policies, procedures, and protocols, and that govern our attitudes and behavior when we are together so that Christ would, indeed, be seen by all. We have a total of seven stated values, and I want, first of all, to read all of them, and then to provide some explanation and commentary as we look at each one.

As the Body of Christ at EBC, we value...

1. **Worship:** we strive to bring pleasure and glory to Jesus in all we do.
2. **Scripture:** the Bible is the supreme source of truth, informing all our decisions and documents.
3. **Prayer:** we devote ourselves to prayer.
4. **Unity:** we hold firmly to the doctrines we consider to be absolute, while respecting different convictions and preferences.
5. **Christlikeness:** we strive to display the fruit of the Spirit and humility in all our conversations and interactions.
6. **Discipleship:** we make disciples in our church, community, and world.
7. **People:** we value every person as made in the image of God and every Christ-follower as an essential part of His body.

Whether we are aware of it or not, all of us possess certain values that guide our decisions and govern our attitudes and behavior. We acquire and adopt those values through a variety of sources—our families, our culture, our education, our experiences, our exposure (or lack of exposure) to various things, to name a few. The values that the elders are presenting to you this morning come from our analysis of Scripture. As men who have been called by God to oversee and shepherd this congregation (Acts 20:28), these values reflect how we believe the Lord would have us lead EBC. So, in all of our gatherings and meetings,

all of our conversations and interactions, all of our activities and endeavors we will make every effort to ensure that these values guide and govern how we relate to each other, how we operate, how we conduct our business, and how we do what we do.

Our first value is worship: *we will strive to bring glory and pleasure to Jesus in all that we do.*

In a national survey, church members were asked the question, “Why does the church exist?” 89 percent of respondents said, “The church’s purpose is to take care of my family’s needs and my needs.” I sincerely hope that you and your family’s needs are being met at EBC, but that is not even close to being the reason why we exist. The church does not exist for us; it exists for Jesus.

Listen to these words from **Colossians 1:15-20**. ¹⁵ *[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:15-20 ESV).*

In this passage Paul is presenting the foundation of a biblical worldview. Ultimate reality is *Christocentric*, which means that everything in this universe *revolves around* Jesus, everything is *about* Jesus, everything is *by* Jesus, and, notice, everything is *for* Jesus. Verse 16, “*we were created through Him and for Him.*” We exist for Jesus’ pleasure.

Paul elaborates on this further in Ephesians 1. He says that we who have put our hope in Christ have been blessed by Him with every spiritual blessing. And then He identifies some of those blessings. We have been chosen by Him, adopted as His sons and daughters, redeemed, forgiven, lavished with His grace, given an inheritance, and sealed by His Spirit.

And the reason we have been given these blessings is not so we can congratulate ourselves or feel good about ourselves. It is, verses 12 and 14, “*for the praise of His glory.*” Whose glory? Jesus’ glory.

In fact, Paul tells us that everything that God has done in this world, going all the way back to Adam and Eve and continuing to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, David, Elijah, Daniel, Esther, Mary, and John-the-Baptist is all about revealing, exalting, and adoring the Lord Jesus Christ. That is God’s grand, eternal purpose.

Thus, it stands to reason that after stating these awe-inspiring truths about the greatness and glory and supremacy of Jesus in Colossians 1, Paul would say, ¹⁷ *...whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Col. 3:17).* Do it for Him. Do it so that He will be pleased. Do it so that He will be honored. Do it so that He will be exalted.

That is a definition of worship, and this is EBC’s first and greatest value. That every decision that is made, every service that is planned, every meeting that is conducted, every ministry that is performed, every activity that is done brings Jesus glory and pleasure.

And we are so serious about this that if we discover or even suspect that Jesus is *not* pleased or honored by a decision we have made, or a ministry we have established, or a service we have performed, or a meeting we have conducted (including our business meetings), then when we become aware of it we will address it, repent of our error and/or presumption, make whatever corrections are necessary, and change course. Because we want *everything* we do to bring Him glory and pleasure.

Our second value, which concerns Scripture, is nearly as important. *The Bible is our Supreme source of truth, informing all our decisions and documents.* The word “Bible” in our name is not a title or a proper name. It is an *adjective* describing what kind of a church we are. For as long as anyone can remember, our church has sought to be aligned with the Word of God in every respect. And I’m not talking about merely the Scriptures we like, or the Scriptures that warm our hearts, or the Scriptures that soothe or comfort our souls. I’m talking about *all* of Scripture.

We believe that *“All Scripture is breathed out (inspired) by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete**, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

We want to be complete. In fact, we want every single person in this church to be complete. Paul told the Colossians that his primary purpose as their pastor was to *“make the word of God fully known...warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature (complete) in Christ”* (Col. 1:25,28). That is our primary purpose as well. One day—on that great and glorious day—we are going to be presenting each one of you to Jesus, and we are striving so that you will be presented mature and complete. And the way we do that is by presenting to you the word of God in its fullness, by admonishing you and teaching you with all wisdom.

So, what does that mean in practice? It means that, in the words of Paul to the Ephesian elders, we preach and teach the whole counsel of God—the whole Bible—from Genesis to Revelation (Acts 20:27). It means that, in the words of Paul to Pastor Timothy, we do our best to present ourselves to God as ones approved, workmen who do not need to be ashamed, rightly handling (correctly interpreting) the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

We are constantly endeavoring to have a better, more accurate understanding of Scripture. So as Scripture becomes clearer to us, if we discover that our constitution or policy manual or church governance or financial stewardship or anything else is not aligned with Scripture, we will change those things so that we are aligned with Scripture.

Because our mission statement says, we will bring glory and pleasure to Jesus by...obeying His will, and Scripture reveals the will of Jesus. Scripture is our supreme and final authority.

One final comment about Scripture. We want you to know that we adamantly affirm that the Bible is the literal Word of God, that every word in Scripture is precisely and exactly the word that God intended His human authors to record, that all 39 books of the Old Testament and all 27 books of the New Testament are absolutely true, and that the original manuscripts are without error.

I mention this because, according to a recent Gallup Poll, only 20% of Americans today believe the Bible is literally true, word for word. More shocking is that less than 50% of Americans who call themselves *evangelical* Christians believe the Bible to be literally true, word for word. Both percentages are trending downward.

I just want you to know, that our confidence in the complete veracity of Scripture is not waning, and it never will, as long as we are careful to select pastors and elders who have an uncompromising stance on this.

That’s all we are going to cover for today. Lord willing, we will continue this presentation next week, and I want to get even more specific about how these values will affect and influence what we do and where we go together as a church.