

# CORE VALUES

Values that drive our ministry

## Why core values are so important

Scan these ten essential reasons why core values are so important to being a healthy congregation and accomplishing Christian ministry. Circle the number of the statement you believe is the best reason for having articulated core values in our congregation.

1. **Values determine ministry distinctiveness.** Clearly articulated core values declare, *"This is what we stand for; this is what we're about; this is who we are."*
2. **Values dictate personal involvement.** People become involved and stay involved in ministry longer if they share core biblical values or convictions.
3. **Values communicate what is important.** Failure to communicate core values wastes time and energy, creates dissatisfaction, and brings needless frustration.
4. **Values embrace positive change.** Values-driven congregations embrace needed change even as their unchanging beliefs keep them anchored in truth.
5. **Values influence overall behavior.** Values affect everything: decisions made, goals set, priorities established, problems solved, conflicts resolved, and more.
6. **Values inspire people to action.** Shared, biblical values give those who serve a greater sense of meaning in their service; values energize and motivate.
7. **Values enhance credible leadership.** Christian leaders must opt for and model a strong Bible-based values system; strong beliefs help build strong leaders.
8. **Values shape ministry character.** Personal character rests on the foundation of personal values; congregational character is defined by corporate core values.
9. **Values contribute to ministry success.** *Success* is the accomplishment of the congregation's mission and vision without compromising bottom-line values.
10. **Values affect priority setting and strategic planning.** Shared core beliefs generate deeper commitment and lead to greater creativity and innovation.

## Examples of churches with Biblical and visible core values

Read Acts 2:42-47.

Make a list of what you suspect were the core values of this congregation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Read Acts 6:1-7

What might have been some core values among these Christians?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Clearly defining core values

- **Core values are not the same as mission or vision.** Mission answers the question, *“Why are we here?”* Vision answers the question, *“What are we going to do?”* Values answer the question, *“Why do we do what we do?”* Mission clarifies the purpose; vision clarifies the destination; values propel the ministry toward that destination. Values precede and determine actions. We want our congregation to be **mission-minded, vision-focused, and values-driven.**

1. Why do so many churches start out having an outward “others” focus but then develop an inward “us” focus?
2. Think about our congregation’s history. Did we start out with a focus on others and then become inward focused? If so or if not, why?

- **Core values are not the same as strategies.** A strategy answers the question, *“How are we going to do it?”* Strategies articulate plans for accomplishing the vision for future ministry. Values affect which strategies are chosen when we set out to implement our vision.

1. If a core value of our church was “every-member ministry,” what might our vision for member ministry look like?
2. What strategy might we consider in order to accomplish that vision?

- **Core values are not the same as doctrinal statements.** A doctrinal statement consists of a ministry’s theological beliefs (e.g. salvation, angels, eternity, etc.) based on the Bible. These statements answer the question, *“What do we believe?”* Values are the precepts that drive ministry, again, answering the question, *“Why do we do what we do?”* There may be overlap between doctrinal statements and core values.

1. What would be a solid, biblical doctrinal statement on salvation?
2. What would be a core value that reflects that doctrinal statement?

### Discovering our corporate core values

To discover our core values, we must ask the question, "Why do we do what we do?" Our priorities are not what we *say* we do but what we *actually* do. **We prove our values by what we plan, fund, carry out, and evaluate.** If it's real, we can probably measure it.

Think both broadly and specifically. Think about your pastors' messages and announcements, your church's Bible classes, and give thought to whatever ministry efforts you have going in your congregation and community. Be sure to recognize what your congregation does beyond its local ministry area as well, in the WELS or elsewhere.

There are a variety of ways to discover the core values of our congregation, but perhaps one of the best is to use a **values audit** designed for that purpose.

### Core values audit

1. Look over the list of possible core values printed below.
2. Ask yourself, "What is the evidence that our congregation passionately holds this concept as a core value?" If it's held as a core value, you're both talking about it and doing it.
3. Check  only those you believe are actual (not aspirational) core values that currently drive ministry in our congregation. These will probably jump off the page for you.
4. Add core values that you feel are missing from the list.
5. Rate each value you checked  from 1 (lowest) to 3 (highest).
6. List from those you rated a 2 or 3 as the most significant top five actual core values.

Check core values; 1= Valued Somewhat 2 = Valued Significantly 3 = Valued Passionately

- \_\_\_ **Prayer:** Talking to the Lord from the heart
- \_\_\_ **Member Ministry:** Equipping members for service that matches their gifts and interests
- \_\_\_ **Worship:** Attributing worth to God by hearing and following his Word
- \_\_\_ **Excellence:** Maintaining high ministry standards that bring glory to God
- \_\_\_ **Evangelism:** Focus on the unchurched and sharing law and gospel with them
- \_\_\_ **Cultural Relevance:** Communicating God's Word in ways that reach those not like us
- \_\_\_ **Creativity:** Coming up with new ideas and ways to do ministry
- \_\_\_ **World Missions:** Spreading the gospel of Christ around the globe
- \_\_\_ **Inactives:** Reclaiming the strayed and straying
- \_\_\_ **Youth:** Nurturing our younger members so they know, love, and serve their Savior
- \_\_\_ **Families:** Building up Christian homes so that they honor Christ
- \_\_\_ **Seniors:** Ministering to and engaging our most mature members in ministry

- \_\_\_ **Tradition:** Holding to customary or time-honored attitudes and actions
- \_\_\_ **Serving Others:** Living life with a focus on others by encouraging and helping them
- \_\_\_ **Being Served:** Expecting benefits and services from others
- \_\_\_ **Means of Grace:** Elevating God’s Word and Sacraments
- \_\_\_ **Relationships:** Getting along with one another and being friendly
- \_\_\_ **Fellowship:** Enjoying each other’s company and caring for each other’s needs
- \_\_\_ **Comfort:** Enjoying the peace and benefits of membership
- \_\_\_ **Faithfulness to the Word:** Holding to Scripture without compromise
- \_\_\_ **Team Ministry:** Accomplishing ministry together by pooling abilities and resources
- \_\_\_ **Bible Knowledge:** Growing in awareness of the truths of Scripture
- \_\_\_ **Biblical Giving:** Supporting ministry based on biblical guidelines
- \_\_\_ **Being Frugal:** Spending as little money as possible
- \_\_\_ **Status Quo:** Preferring the way things are now
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

From your perspective, at our congregation, which are the **top five actual core values**?

*Rank the top five actual core values rated 2 (valued significantly) or 3 (valued passionately):*

- #1 \_\_\_\_\_
- #2 \_\_\_\_\_
- #3 \_\_\_\_\_
- #4 \_\_\_\_\_
- #5 \_\_\_\_\_

**Actual or aspirational values?**

1. Proclaim the Word of God to all people; law and gospel
2. Share Jesus with people who don’t know him
3. Conduct Christ-centered worship
4. Invest in Christian education for all ages
5. Equip the saints for works of service
6. Strive for excellence in all facets of ministry
7. Develop loving relationships with one another