

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

In a Divisive World Your Values Reveal Your God

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Your Values Will Match Your Lord's

The desire for even a good thing can become a bad thing if it becomes a ruling thing. It is good to want some control in your life, but if your heart is ruled by control, you will destroy your life and relationships. It's good to want to be happy, but if happiness rules you, you will be endlessly demanding, frustrated, and angry. It's good to want to know right and be right, but if being right rules you, you will be critical, unapproachable, judgmental, and unlivable. It's good to want relationships, but if your heart is ruled by the acceptance of others, you will be entitled and demanding or paralyzed by fear of man. There is no other safe lord over your heart than the Lord of lords. And there is no better way of living than to value what he values.

I want to propose six street-level examples of what it means in our current cultural climate to value what God values.

1. The gospel is of greater value than politics.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, politics should not form your foundational worldview; the gospel should. If you are a believer, politics is not what should give you your identity; the gospel should. If you are a believer, political power should not give

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you hope; the gospel should. If you are a believer, you should give your life not to any earthly king but to the King of kings. In this moment, politics and political power have become too important, too central, and too life-shaping; they have become a seedbed of much division, acrimony, and reactivity in the Christian community.

2. Relationships are of greater value than dominating the conversation and winning the day.

The gospel is entirely relational. Christ purchased for us peace with God and, through that peace, peace with one another. The gospel teaches us that our walk with God is not an individual pursuit but a community project. Second only to the command to love God above all else is the command to love your neighbor as yourself. The problem is that so much of our contact with one another, so much of our ongoing conversation, and so much of our debate of the issues of the day are no longer personal but digital. In this arena, people become dehumanized; they become post, clicks, or likes. Because we lose the sense of flesh-and-blood relationships that necessitate commitment and carry consequences, we allow ourselves to behave on social media in ways that are antisocial, not recognizing the value of our relationships with one another.

3. God's honor is of greater value than your comfort, appreciation, and respect.

So much of the toxic reactivity that greets us every day is the result of a self-focused, self-aggrandizing, and selfreferencing way of looking at and experiencing the world. It is me in the center, and the offenses that grieve, anger, and motivate me the most are perceived offenses against me. It is an entitled and demanding way of living that never produces personal happiness or relational peace. The gospel of Jesus Christ is meant to produce in you a heart-shaping awe of God that makes his glory the thing that then directs everything you do and say. Self-glory always destroys community and is a sad substitute for the true peace and happiness that is to be found in living for the glory of one infinitely greater than you.

4. Unity is of greater value than individualism or tribalism.

Sadly, sin causes us to be better at division than unity. Sin causes us to confuse unity with a demand for uniformity. Sin causes us to think that we can do individually what can only be accomplished in community with others. Sin causes us to divide into little issue/theology/affinity tribes, often treating those outside of our tribe as if they were the enemy. The very nature of social media is that it makes it all too easy to succumb to these

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temptations. Perhaps the evangelical church has never been more divided and more at war with itself than it is right now. In Jesus's final prayer, he argues for the value of our unity with one another (see [John 17](#)). He argues that our unity with one another is meant to be a powerful argument for the gospel. You cannot read Scripture without concluding that this unity is not a luxury but essential for our continuing growth in grace and our ongoing witness to the world.

Holiness is not only God's call; it is what his grace works to produce in us every day.

5. Love is of greater value than even the most subtle forms of hate.

More than once people have reacted to something I tweeted with accusatory, character-judging, and dismissive responses. These kinds of responses do not come from a heart of love. They do not lovingly encourage me to reflect, reconsider, or repent. They are the words of judgment and dismissal. Sadly, they are posted by brothers and sisters in Christ, who are bound together with me in a unity that only the Holy Spirit can create. Together we are to be known for our love for one another. The subtle hatred of disrespect, dismissal, mockery, cancellation, and judgment never produces good fruit. When someone yells at you, you defend yourself; you don't open up your heart. Only love has the power to break down my defenses, creating a safe place for me to take an honest look at myself. And love assures me that you are for me and will be with me even when sin and disagreement get in the way.

6. Character is of greater value than position or power.

One functional idol in the current Christian culture is power. For the purpose of political power, we will compromise our character and close our eyes to the character flaws of the leaders we've attached our hopes to. In his word God listed the qualifications for leaders in his church. The entire list is a character list, with the exception of one skill set (the ability to teach). God's call to every believer is "Be holy as I am holy." Holiness forever trumps power. Holiness forever trumps position. Holiness is not only God's call; it is what his grace works to produce in us every day. There are too many Christian bullies on social media. There are too many bully leaders in the church. No Christian community can remain healthy if the quest for power and position motivates us more than the beauty of godliness.

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This article is adapted from Reactivity: How the Gospel Transforms Our Actions and Reactions by Paul David Tripp.



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