

## CORE VALUES part 2, Dependence, Lost, Family 8-11-13

(Exodus 3) We are taking a break from our series on Ephesians. Actually, it is a year-long break. In the Fall, we will launch a series on the Great Escape – how God led Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt. Until we get to that in September, I think it good to spend some time as a body looking at what the Lord has brought us to esteem most highly in our corporate life as a church and in our ministry. We began this last Sunday – a look at the five Core Values of North Park Church. They are:

1. **CHRIST** – Jesus is preeminent, the One from whom, through whom and unto whom are all things.
2. **TRUTH** - God's word is powerful and is to be learned, loved and lived.
3. **DEPENDENCE** – God is the Source of all our strength, wisdom and love; therefore we pray.
4. **THE LOST** – Both near and far, unbelievers matter to God and to us.
5. **FAMILIES** – healthy marriages and children are vital to God's mission in the world.

Last time we began to work our way through these and covered the first two. Today, we will look at the last three of these important propositions that are intended to guide our life and work together. I remind you that these five were carefully and prayerfully chosen from a couple of dozen possible expressions. We believe these are big deals. Now – saying that we believe these are big deals does not mean that we think our conduct is entirely consistent with each value. There are things I know I should value which my behavior regularly confirms and things I know I should value which my behavior does not regularly confirm. Today, we will cover some values toward which we aspire, but which may have not adequately marked our personal or corporate lives.

We begin with the value on dependence. Dependence. That may seem like an odd value and for most organizations it would be, but not for the church. We are called to do things that are far beyond our capacity. We are called to fight an enemy who is far stronger than we are on our own. We need help – with a capital H. And I hope you know that the dependence we desire is a dependence on God. Do you feel the need for God's help? Have you sensed that today? Did you sense it on Friday morning? Are you living in the awareness of your innate inadequacy? If you are not, if I am not, I suggest it is because we don't understand our mission. Moses was a guy who was commissioned by God to do something that seemed way beyond his capacity. In

Exodus chapter 3, God has appeared to Moses in the desert and tells Him of His purpose to free the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. In verse 10 He speaks to Moses and says **10** *Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.*” Now, Moses wasn’t naïve. This had to sound like an impossible charge. So, Moses responded the way you and I would. **11** *But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”* You get that? Moses wasn’t saying, *Well, God, you came to the right place. I am definitely your man.* He’s like – *What? Do you know what a nobody I am?* God was fully aware and so He put it in perspective in the next verse where He says **12b** *Certainly I will be with you.* Moses can accomplish this deliverance, but only in a context of dependence. God saw that, but so too did Moses. And, as you read the Moses story you see how he repeatedly goes back to God appealing for help because he felt his need.

So, Christian, Do you feel your need? North Park Church, do you feel your need for God? Well, I don’t really need God, I have a master’s degree in chemical engineering and a good job at a secure company in the world’s only superpower. My church doesn’t really need God. We have a nice building, and a staff and a balanced budget. Are you kidding me? Those are the kinds of things the devil uses to desensitize us. Moses may not have been feeling his need for God when he woke on this particular morning. But now, he has been given a mission. If you are my age you will remember the hit show from the 60s, *Mission Impossible*. The show always started with Peter Graves finding a miniature tape recorder with a message that said, *“Good morning Mr. Phelps, your mission, if you choose to accept it is to overthrow the emperor of Upawamga, short-sheet his bed and sneak out of the country without being detected.* You know, I never remember Mr. Phelps not accepting a mission. You never heard him say, *Forget it, that’s insane!* It would have made for a short show. But Mr. Phelps was getting his assignments from headquarters and he was committed to doing his job. Life changes when you get a mission. Moses just got one that sounded totally impossible. He is standing out in the wilderness, talking to a bush who orders him to walk away with Pharaoh’s entire slave force. Immediately, he felt his need of God. A theory to consider about why we don’t feel our need in the church and therefore don’t pray as we should. We haven’t accepted the assignment. God has told us to make disciples of all nations. God has told us to be salt and light in a land hostile to Him. But somehow we really don’t feel responsible for that. We don’t pray because we are not engaged in

the battle!! John Piper, in *The Pleasures of God*, writes this: *Prayer is the walkie talkie on the battle-field of the world. It calls on God for courage. It calls in for troop deployment. It calls in for protection and air cover. It calls in for fire power to blast open a way for the Word. It calls in for the miracle of healing for wounded soldiers. This is the place of prayer – on the battlefield of the world. It is a wartime walkie-talkie for spiritual warfare, not a domestic intercom to increase the comforts of the saints. And one of the reasons it malfunctions in the hands of so many Christian soldiers is that they have gone AWOL.* That means “absent without leave” but it could also stand for American way of life.

Prayer meetings among church folks intrigue me. Get a group of Christians together and ask what they want to pray about, what do you normally get? This person is sick, that person is travelling, someone else lost their job. Or you might get, *nothing for me, everything is good.* When we think of asking for prayer we only think defensively. If there is no crisis, there is no prayer. But what about the mission?! Do we really believe we must fulfill it? Have we been gripped by that assignment? I read Paul and he says in Ephesians 6:**19** *Pray on my behalf, that utterance may be give to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.* That is missional praying. You do it when you grasp the magnitude of a God-sized task which you have embraced. If someone comes to me and says, *Hey Dan, can you help me jump the battery in my car?* My reaction is not, *Oh Lord, I need You. Help me now or I fail.* But when God calls on me to lead my neighbor to Jesus or confront a wayward brother or go serve in Upawamga I am either going to say, *No*, or I will say, *Help!* Andrew Bonar wrote in 1853, “*God likes to see His people shut up to this, that there is no hope but in prayer. Herein lies the church’s power against the world.*” ® The early church in Jerusalem seemed to get this. Jesus had said to them in Acts 1:**8** *you shall be My witnesses to the remotest part of the earth.* I expect they looked around at their small group and wondered, *Uh.... Us? Really?* But they embraced the mission in faith. So guess what they did next? Acts 1:**14** *They were all continually devoting themselves to prayer.* Yea. They embraced a mission that was beyond them so they expressed their need for God by calling out to Him. Not long after, in Acts 4:**31** *when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.* Maybe, when we reach a point of desperation about our mission we will cry out to God and He will shake things up for us and through us. Our core value statement says God is the source of all strength, wisdom, and love.

Without love we won't care, without wisdom we won't know what to do, and without strength we cannot execute. Bottom line is that missionaries, those in the battle, need God, know they need Him and so they pray. Will we be such dependent missionaries, through whom God works for His glory? Will you? Ponder what that means for your personal prayer life, for your corporate prayer life.

We move now to Core Value #4 which is *the lost. Both near and far, unbelievers matter to God and to us.* Next Sunday is going to be a Missions Sunday for us so I will keep this portion briefer because of that and also focus more on the unbelievers who are near. We are saying that we value the lost. We say this largely because we know this is a value of our Lord. Jesus said in Luke 19:**10** *The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost.* Luke 15 is the classic chapter concerning this as there we read about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son and how there is a great longing for these to be found and how there is great rejoicing when they are. We understand that this represents God's heart toward lost sinners. Our God is a seeking God. We realize that all of us, even those who grew up in the church, all of us were lost and needed to be sought by a merciful Savior. Outside of sports, I have not watched much on TV in the last decade, but I did get into the TV drama that was called, *Lost*. Any fans of *Lost* here? I saw it on the internet. Over time it got weird and less rewarding but it started out really good. It is what I call a psychodrama. It was a little like Gilligan's Island. There was a plane crash that left a bunch of folks stranded on a mysterious island. They were in an literal sense – lost. So, the external plot each week was about how they tried to survive and escape the island. But, the more significant plots had to do with the internal, spiritual lostness of the main characters. The implication of the show was that some powerful mysterious force had drawn them to this island so that they, these lost ones, could find themselves in a spiritual sense. The writers of *Lost* came very close to representing what God does in some of our lives when He draws us powerfully to Himself and executes a plan to create wholeness where there was brokenness.

Clearly, we have a Savior who is dying to bring lost people home to Himself. He has a heart for the lost. Do we? Do you? Do I? Wow – the two areas of discipleship about which Christians tend to feel most guilty are these – prayer and evangelism. We are hitting them both in one message. Lord, help us. Prayer and evangelism. This is where we most often identify our failures. When I ask Christians about their prayer life I usually hear, *Oh, it's not near what it should be.* When I ask about their outreach, their witness, I usually just get squirming. I can

certainly relate to that. I am with you there. Let me go a step further with you though. We usually excuse our inadequacies in prayer and evangelism as a failure of discipline. I don't make time to pray, I can't find time to reach out. My life is too busy or too disordered. I get that. I really do understand the discipline problem here. But – but --- I think we need to face up to the heart problem that is behind it. Is not our lack of prayer rooted in a lack of dependence and trust? Is not our lack of outreach rooted in a lack of Christ-like love for lost people? The problem is not just in my schedule – it is in me. I am speaking about Dan Hendley right now. I don't value the lost as I should. You know, this list of core values at our church. Some we have and want to have. Others, we just know we should have. This is one we should have but aren't doing so well at living out. On my To-Do list which I look at many times a day you can find ten permanent items. These are reminders about things I believe are important but I have demonstrated a tendency to forget. One of those ten reminders simply says: *the lost*. In the busy-ness of life, trying to do all I feel I should do as a pastor, as a husband, as a son, as a father, as a citizen, I forget to make time in my heart and my schedule to be like Jesus and seek to save the lost. When you pray for me, and please do pray for me. When you pray for me – pray that I would have a heart for the lost. When my heart is right, my schedule will come around.

Now, you may be aware that in the church world there is a certain kind of church that takes or gets the label of “seeker” church. The word “seeker” may not be biblically appropriate, but it is used to refer to those who are not committed to Jesus but who are somewhat open to spiritual things. These seeker churches are all about the lost, sometimes to the detriment of other important values. Their sermons, their music, their buildings, their programs are focused on attracting the unchurched. North Park's former youth pastor, Brian Tome, leads such a church in Cincinnati. His goal was to build a church for people who don't like church. We call that being “seeker-driven.” Many of us find that unacceptable because it too easily leads to compromise and displaces Christ or the truth as our cardinal values. But, too often we become guilty of seeker indifference. North Park Church's goal is that we be a body that is not seeker-driven but at least “seeker sensitive” and to be a people who truly care about the lost. I and we have a ways to go. The apostle Paul spoke about his fellow Jews who were unbelievers and said in Romans 10:1 *my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation*. Can you say that about your neighbors? Your co-workers? Are there some lost people you are praying for? Talking to? Inviting to church? We've been going as a church all over the world the last few months. Some

to Sierra Leone and Haiti. Some to Tunica, some to New Jersey, some to minister among the disabled. That is all good and needful. We are to love the lost who are far from God and far from us. We will talk more about that next Sunday. But for now we remember that God values those who are without purpose, without hope, without a future, and without Jesus right here in our community. So must we value the lost because thankfully our Leader surely does.

Finally, the fifth of our core values is the family. We say that *healthy marriages and children are vital to God's mission in the world*. By the way, we see a lot of connection between core value four and core value five. We believe our children are born lost. So, as we seek to make disciples or to win the lost, the first place we look is to our families and our children. If you follow the culture wars in our country you have heard a great deal in recent weeks about the plight of African-Americans. This has flowed from the George Zimmerman trial and the buzz on the one hand says, *Look how alive racism is in America. Look how undervalued black life is*. On the other hand, some are arguing that the real problem for the black community is not racism and hostility from whites but black on black killing, mostly in the big cities, which is part of the drug and *gangsta* culture that has grown up around black young men who are raised without fathers. Almost half the births in our country now are illegitimate and over 73% among black Americans. Has this negatively impacted our social fabric? Oh my! This, the devastation of the family, is at the core of it all and among all races. Simple social observation should be enough to persuade us of the importance of stable, strong families. We can come to that conclusion without the Bible, but the Bible gives us plenty on this subject. It teaches us that God deals not just with individuals but with families and normally works in and through them. As we read the Old Testament we see how God saves Noah from the flood. Genesis 6:8 says that Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord. But, when the ark sailed, was it loaded with only Noah and the animals? No, God saved also Noah's family. When the Lord established His covenant with Abraham what did he say? He said, "My covenant is with you and with your descendants after you." When the angels took Lot out of Sodom they came for Lot and his family. When God established a covenant with David it was again a covenant pertaining to David and his descendants after him. The point I'm making, which can hardly be challenged, is that throughout Scripture we see God working His grace and judgment through families. In Genesis 12, when the Lord came to Abraham and told him how his descendants would be as the stars in the heavens he also said 12:**3d** *in you all the families of the earth will be blessed*. That was the start of God's old covenant dealings with men.

Then at the start of his new covenant dealings we read this in Acts 2, the very first Christian sermon, Peter is announcing the promises of pardon through Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He says Acts 2:39 *the promise is for you and your children.*

Okay, what does this mean for us as a church? First, it does not mean that we devalue singles. On the contrary, we rejoice in you who are single. Whether you are 25, 55, 75 you are precious to us. You are part of our family. We and our book affirm the value of your many contributions to the body of Christ. But hey, all of us come from families and can understand our point that *healthy marriages and children are vital to God's mission in the world.*

So, what this value does mean is that we intend to invest, as a body, in the interests and concerns not only of this, but of future generations. Tomorrow our new youth pastor will be driving north from Atlanta in his Toyota Camry. We are investing in him as a leader for our teens. Kim Brunner continues to serve us as director of childrens' ministries. We have invested in nurseries and classrooms for our kids, a great youth room upstairs. All of this is designed to bring Christ and His truth to our children of all ages. But, primarily we are seeking to bless them by raising up parents who are fit to serve as examples and teachers and counselors in hopes that we will have whole families, large ones and small ones, that are united in their devotion to Christ and equipped to pass on their faith to future generations. Such a thing is sadly rare. But what a beautiful thing it is when we see it. In a month Beth and I will be at a wedding in Atlanta for a young man from such a family. I had the privilege of leading his daddy to Jesus in his apartment thirty years ago. I had the privilege of joining him in marriage to a godly woman. I had the privilege of baptizing his three children and watching them grow up. His daughter used to sing in our praise team in Florida and I remember hearing her sing a solo when she was a high-school senior and I was crying because it was so awesome to ponder God's mercies that work through a family like that. We heard a few months back from Jonathan Shirk who was given this great legacy of godliness and faith. Brian Ham, our new youth pastor, comes from a similar background. Beth and I know well an amazing family by the name of Iverson. For generations they have been pastors and missionaries. We were in seminary with Dan and Carol Iverson. Dan's dad was a pastor. His grandfather was a pastor and wrote the little chorus, *Spirit of the Living God*. Dan and Carol went on to start a presbytery of churches in Japan, but also raised up nine children who are now serving the Lord as missionaries and pastors all over the world. It is such a glorious thing when the baton of faith is successfully passed from one generation to the

next. I know you want that to happen in your family. Nothing is more important to that endeavor than parents. A massive study recently came to its conclusion. It was the National Study of Youth and Religion. Many years in the making. A woman named Kenda Creasy Dean wrote a book on its findings and she says: *One theme overwhelms every other finding of the study: Parents matter most in shaping the religious lives of their children.* No surprise is it? Peers matter. Pastors matter. Teachers matter. But parents are the biggest factor by far. Of course this doesn't mean that godly parents only and always have godly kids. We know that is not the case. But, we know that no single influence looms as large as the parental one. That means that what we do in church, as a church, is meant to assist, not replace mom and dad. And our greatest gift to our children is healthy parents with healthy marriages.

In early 2007, after twenty-four years in one church, I was out of work, out of the ministry, and praying every day in an upper room in our Florida home for God to give me a fresh vision of His purpose for the rest of my life. I wasn't sure what that would involve. I didn't know if that meant another pastorate or not. As I was seeking the Lord over this, I was given a very distinct impression from the Spirit of God that wherever I ended up, and whatever I would do, I was to devote myself to nurturing young fathers who were beginning their families. Two years later the Lord directed me here, to this church. I wasn't sure how that fit with His word to me in 07, but since I came to North Park Church what has God done? Not exclusively, but for the most part, who has He been bringing to our church? Young couples, either newly married or in the early stages of raising their children. We aren't yet packed out in here but our nursery is exploding and for the last four years I have been leading small groups that include men or couples with young children. I have a new one starting in two weeks, a half-dozen young dads who are going to lead families and the result of their fathering will impact generations. I find myself now, as well, informally mentoring four or five young pastors, who are also young dads. The ripple effect of such young fathers and church leaders down through the years can hardly be calculated. We see, as the Bible affirms, that healthy marriages and families are a key component of the church's mission. So, we are committed to helping you with your family, not pulling you away from it, but supporting you in your efforts. That means, North Park Church, staffing our nursery, and our Sunday Schools and our Student ministries. But it also means training, mentoring, and assisting moms and dads in their critical, critical work. We want North Park Church to be the absolute



best place in the North Hills to raise up young adults who will make a difference for Jesus in their generation. Amen?

So there you have it. Christ, Truth, Dependence, the Lost and Families. These are the five core values established by your elders at North Park Church. We believe these are consistent with the values of the kingdom of God and fit how God has constituted us as a local body. The men who selected these five values are committed to them. What about you? What does it mean to be committed to something? Think of ham and eggs. The hen is involved, the pig is committed. Yes, it means you are ready to lay down your life for these things. I'm in. I'm ready to be guided in my life and ministry by these five values. I invite you to sign on as well and join me in prayer that our lives would more perfectly accord with that which matters most to God.