



The radical values that Jesus taught

TN25 Training Notes series: Planning

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It is helpful for churches and mission agencies to define their 'values'. These describe what matters most in how they go about their life and tasks. They are matters that they are passionate about. They define an organisational or church culture.

But before you get the keyboard out and start setting down how you see yourselves as you are, it is instructive to think if a pattern of values has already been defined. In particular, what were the values that Jesus taught to his disciples? No, you won't find this as a bullet-point summary in the introduction to your Bible, but it is clearly there in the pages of the Gospels.

Here is an exercise which you might like to copy and develop. Take one Gospel (I tried St Matthew) and read it through jotting down indicators of the value system that Jesus set for those who were his. Then study each point and group those that followed a broadly similar theme. I gave the groups titles and found I had five lists of four, or in one case five, items each.

You might come up with a different set of categories from the same Gospel. You might like to try the same exercise from Mark or Luke. But, in the hope that it may be of interest, this is what I discovered. Please write and tell me what you think about this, or what you come up with on a similar exercise.

Having carried out this exercise, the test then is put the value system into operation. The problem is that most churches do not follow anything like what comes out here. Jesus' values are far too radical for most of us, far too different from the culture of today's world. And so we prefer an easier route. See what you think.

All references are to St Matthew's Gospel.

1 We are to give Jesus Christ absolute priority

- over all religious traditions (12:1-14; 15:1-11)
- over all human relationships (8:21-22; 10:37-39; 12:46-50)
- over all material possessions (6:19-24; 19:16-30)

2 We are to seek the approval of God rather than other people

- coming to him in repentance not because of our achievements (3:2; 4:17)
- approaching him in faith whatever our human status (8:5-13; 15:21-28; 21:28-32)
- dealing privately with him rather than showing off to others (6:1-8, 16-18)

3 We are to be vulnerable with each other

- by forgiving each other (6:12-15; 18:21-35)
- by checking ourselves before we warn others (7:1-5)
- by seeking peace (5:9,23-24)

4 We are to be clearly different in our behaviour

- by turning the other cheek (5:38-42)
- by loving our enemies (5:44-48; 6:12-15)
- by valuing everyone (19:13-15; 26:6-13)

5 We are to be radically different in our attitudes

- strength lies in weakness (5:3-12)
- life comes through death (16:24-27)
- the least is the greatest (18:1-6)
- the last will be first (20:1-16)

So how about making this list your church's values, seeking to live up to them? Could you accept that challenge?

These notes are available at www.john-truscott.co.uk/resources/training/tn25.pdf. For material on the concept of 'vision', see Training Notes TN32, *What do you mean by vision?* For indexes of all items available on the site, visit the [resources page](#).

Contact John if you would like to enquire about the possibility of his running a training event on vision and values for you.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN25 under Planning.

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