

# What Are the True Values?

Rod Reynolds

**Not infrequently in public discourse we hear the word “values” mentioned. Many of the issues we face as a nation and a world boil down to a question of values. For example, the questions of abortion, human rights, women’s rights, homosexual rights, religious expression, out of control government spending and national debt? Do these issues have anything to do with values?**

Some say politicians should not concern themselves with values. That the government should not concern itself with values. Yet, nearly every political and social issue you can name touches on the personal values of citizens and the public values of the nation. There is a sense among many people that the United States has abandoned sound values and that fact accounts for many of the problems this country faces (cf. [“Needed: The Virtue of Courage,”](#) Bill Bowman, [corevaluesgroup.com](#); [“Morality in America,”](#) Norman S. Ream, [www.fee.org](#); [“The End of Christian America,”](#) Jon Meacham, [Newsweek.com](#)).

The profound changes that have occurred in recent decades in the nation’s values are seen reflected in pathologies such as the dramatic increase in out-of-wedlock births, (1), (2) incidence of drug abuse, proliferation of pornography and social changes such as legalization of abortion, same-sex marriage, and many other aspects of personal behavior and public life.

Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986), well-known minister of the Church of God and founder of the Worldwide Church of God, also founded Ambassador College (later known as Ambassador University) in Pasadena, California in 1947. His vision for the college was to provide an education for students based on the concept of the Bible as the foundation of knowledge. He chose for its motto, “Recapture True Values.”

What are values? Are values important, and if so why? Does it matter what your values are? Finally, what are the “true values”?

Let’s begin by defining the term. What is a value? One dictionary definition: “The desirability or worth of a thing; intrinsic worth; utility.” Another definition: “Attributed or assumed valuation; esteem or regard.”

We could say that “values” are those things in life to which individuals assign the greatest worth. What are some things that humans tend to value? Some of the things that readily come to mind are money, power, fame, strength, pleasure, beauty, knowledge, tradition, family. These are things that almost all of us tend to value to one degree or another. In our culture, and in man’s history, these tend to be the things most valued, even if they are not recognized as the highest or most noble values.

Why are values important? Because the things you value most highly are going to be what motivate you. What you truly value determines how you act, and what kind of person you are.

Every human being capable of making decisions has a set of values, whether he realizes it or not. For every individual some values take precedence over others. Sometimes an individual's personal values conflict. For example, a man may set a certain value on his family. But he may also value money. Money may be, and most likely is, necessary for taking care of his family. But the value he places on acquiring money as an end in itself may take precedence over the value he places on his family. Money may, and often has, become such an obsession with some men that family no longer matters, or at least, it doesn't matter as much as getting money does.

Human experience shows that mankind tends to value most highly some of the things I've mentioned. But God's word shows that God's values are quite different from those most common to mankind.

It's essential that we as Christians learn the difference, and that we learn to share God's values. The Bible is, in a sense, an expression of God's values. And it shows a record of continual conflict between God's values and those of mankind as a whole.

Contrary to what some say, values are, or ought to be, a key concern of government. They should be of concern to you in your own family government. They should be a matter of concern to you on an even more personal level – the government of yourself. A principal goal of God's government is not to rule by coercion, but to teach us God's values, empower us to internalize them, so that we come to rule ourselves by them as God rules himself ([Proverbs 16:32](#); [25:28](#); [Acts 24:25](#); [Galatians 5:23](#); [2 Peter 1:6](#)).

Why is it important to God that we learn to share his values? There are at least two reasons. (1) They make possible close relationship with God ([Amos 3:3](#); [5:12-15](#)). Note that God is not pleased when we disregard his values. But he offers grace to those who are willing to come into harmony with his values. (2) God's values are "true values." That is, they make possible the achievement of the fullest measure of long term happiness and fulfillment ([Proverbs 3:1-2](#); [Psalm 16:11](#)).

Let's take a more detailed look at some of these things humans tend to value so much, and see how God views them:

Most everyone values money. Most all of us would like to have more of it. We tend to value money because with it we can buy the things we need and want. Many associate having lots of money with status and influence. To some money is the highest value, it becomes so important that they will steal and kill for it.

Having money is not wrong. But there are many qualities God values more highly. Among men, the desire to have money is one of the most common false values.

A value becomes false when it assumes a place in one's hierarchy of values out of proportion to its true value. False values corrupt the mind, and lead to destructive behavior.

One of the consequences of placing too much value on wealth is that it can lead to partiality ([James 2:1-9](#)). An inordinate desire for money produces injustice ([James 5:1-6](#)). One of the pitfalls often affecting the rich (and even some who are not so rich) is that they

tend to trust in riches ([Mark 10:17-31](#)). The point here is that serving God should be seen as a higher value than acquiring or hanging onto wealth.

People often put money ahead of God. I've seen people walk away from a meaningful relationship with God because keeping the Sabbath would cost their job, or they believed it would. The rich man Jesus encountered in the incident recorded in [Mark 10:17-22](#) may have to some degree obeyed some of the commandments, but he was guilty of idolatry, violating the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" ([Deuteronomy 5:7](#)). A wise person will work hard, work smart, and manage his resources wisely, but no one should make material wealth his main goal or interest in life ([Matthew 6:24, 33](#); [1 Timothy 6:6-11](#)). These things Paul admonishes us to pursue, "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness," are valued far more highly by God than money. We should see them in the same light.

It's not uncommon for people to want others to notice them and look up to them, and so seek fame, or notoriety. Both young and old can be afflicted with this false value. Boys may want to be good in football or basketball because it makes them noticed, it makes them popular. Girls may want to be on the high school cheerleading squad, because the cheerleaders are often thought of as the most "popular" students in the school.

In Texas, a few years ago, one mother placed so much value on her daughter becoming a cheerleader that she had one of the rival girls murdered. Putting too much store in being accepted, well thought of or popular is a form of vanity that can lead to compromise with higher values and can manifest itself in other forms of destructive behavior.

What's more important to you, being accepted by other people, or being accepted by God? Being praised by other people or being praised by God? Among the rulers of the Jews at the time of Jesus were some who believed in him, but did not confess their belief because they valued the approval of men more than that of God ([John 12:42-43](#)).

A major character weakness that afflicted Saul, the king of Israel, and that destroyed him was an inordinate desire to be popular, to be well liked ([1 Samuel 15:3, 7-9](#)). Instead of obeying God Saul did what would make him popular with the people ([1 Samuel 15:17-24](#)). How many times have we disobeyed God because we feared what others may think? This character weakness came out again later when Saul heard the women sing "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" ([1 Samuel 18:7](#)). It was then that Saul began to harbor thoughts of murder against David ([1 Samuel 18:8-11](#)).

Putting a false value on notoriety, popularity, and such can lead to competitiveness and cause you to actually hate others, as Saul hated David, and as the Jewish leaders hated Jesus. Saul hated David, the Jewish leaders hated Jesus, because they sought honor from men, but not the honor that comes from God ([John 5:44](#)).

Putting a false value on the praise of men can manifest itself in pride. Satan became jealous of God, and tried to set himself up as God's equal, leading to his rebellion ([Isaiah 14:13-14](#); [Ezekiel 28:11-17](#)). God places greater value on humility, and service to others. Christ endured humiliation and rejection to do God's will ([Isaiah 53:3](#)). Because Jesus put righteousness above acceptance he will reign over all ([Hebrews 1:8-9](#)). Men and women faithful to God have often been rejected and persecuted by others ([Hebrews 11:35-39](#)). Those who truly seek God may be rejected by the world, sometimes by erstwhile friends or

associates, but they will be accepted and rewarded by God ([Isaiah 56:6-7](#); [John 1:11](#); [6:66](#); [Acts 10:35](#); [2 Timothy 4:16](#); [Hebrews 11:6](#)). Serving Christ should be to us a higher value than being popular with others ([1 Peter 2:19-21](#); [4:12-16](#)).

Some value power. They want to rule other people. They want to call the shots, have things their way. History is full of examples of how individuals, both men and women, social groups, and entire nations have struggled for power over one another. In the home, some men have been guilty of abusing their wives and children to maintain power over them. Sometimes women have been abusive and manipulative. The “women’s movement” arose partly as a consequence of abusive and unjust treatment of women, while at the same time its leaders and advocates often betraying an inordinate lust for power. In the name of women’s rights and freedom, leaders of the so-called “women’s liberation” movement have advocated policies which are not only often harmful to women, but which also result in neglectful and abusive treatment of children, both the born and unborn.

Both men and women have been willing to go to the most extreme lengths to gain power. Intrigue, violence, murder, and war are often the results of humans struggling for power. Adam and Eve sinned by taking to themselves authority, or power, not rightfully theirs ([Genesis 2:16-17](#); [3:1-5](#)). Human beings seeking power, will often rebel, fight, and kill to get it.

God says we should value submission and obedience to law and government, as long as such submission does not conflict with what God requires of us ([Titus 3:1](#); [Acts 5:29](#)). Jesus willingly submitted himself to God ([John 6:38](#); [8:29](#)). Do not jostle for power. Prefer one another ([Romans 12:10](#)). Wives are required according to God’s word to submit to their husbands ([Ephesians 5:22](#)). Out of love we must submit to one another, that is, give deference to one another as is appropriate for the circumstances ([Ephesians 5:21](#)). Children are commanded to submit to their parents ([Ephesians 6:1-4](#)). Husbands must love their wives, and honor them ([Ephesians 5:25](#); [1 Peter 3:7](#)). Above all, we must submit to God, and obey him ([Philippians 2:12-16](#)). In whatever station we find ourselves, we must seek not to manipulate others to our own ends, but to serve out of concern and love ([Matthew 20: 25-28](#)).

Not infrequently in the world an inordinate value is placed on physical beauty. But God places far greater value on the character of a woman (or man, for that matter) who fears him, and who displays a meek and quiet spirit ([Proverbs 31:30](#); [1 Peter 3:3-4](#)).

Knowledge, or what is thought to be knowledge, is often deemed of great value. Yet, much of mankind’s knowledge is based on faulty human reasoning, feelings, or mystical visions. Very early in the history of Christianity Gnostic heresies arose, placing great emphasis on purported mystical knowledge. Platonistic philosophies from the second to twelfth centuries, and beyond, dominated Christian thought. Many medieval ideas about God and religion were influenced by it and other pagan philosophies and associated practices. Popular Christianity became a corrupt and confused amalgam of pagan religious and philosophical ideas and practices along with some teachings of Scripture. In the process, many of the most fundamental teachings of Scripture were lost from view, and remain hidden from most of mankind ([Revelation 12:9](#)).

In modern times, rationalism and materialism have become dominant in much of the world, promoting unsound speculation in the name of what is falsely called “science.” The limited,

incomplete, and often erroneous knowledge of mankind is often exalted, while fundamental truths of God's word are rejected ([Hosea 4:6](#)). God respects those who value his word, his truth ([Isaiah 66:2](#)). Jesus came to bear witness to the truth ([John 18:37-38](#)). We should place great value on true knowledge, understanding that the source of truth is God, and if we seek it of him he will grant it ([Proverbs 2:1-10](#)).

Of all values, the highest and most noble is love. Love is so essential to God's values and his nature that God's word tells us, "God is love" ([1 John 4:8](#)). Divine love is the foundation of his law and way of life ([Matthew 22:34-40](#)). There are fundamentally two ways of life we can choose from: get verses give. The world's values are often based on get. God's values are based on give.

God's selfless, sacrificial, divine love for humanity has been expressed in the Father's desire to share eternal life with us, mere humans, and consequently, his willingness to give to us, along with many other gifts, the life of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, as payment for our sins. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)).

The love of God is reflected in the willingness of Jesus Christ to lay down his life for us in an act of supreme sacrifice. We are expected to imitate God's example of concern and selflessness. "... walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us..." ([Ephesians 5:2](#)). "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" ([1 John 4:10-11](#)). There are many more examples and specific instructions in the Bible that can help us learn how to inculcate this highest of values into our lives, with God's help and through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Each one of us needs to take stock of himself, examine his own life, in light of the true values expressed in God's word. God knows what our real motivations are, and where we need to change ([Hebrews 4:12-13](#)). Do we?

Our lives should reflect the give way, the way that values service to God, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness ahead of money. The way that values honor from God ahead of honor from men. The way that values cooperation and service ahead of power for the sake of power. The way that values godly character ahead of physical beauty. The way that values the truth of God's word ahead of the opinions of men. The way that values love toward God and neighbor as the highest of life's obligations.

1. [Changing Patterns of nonmarital childbearing in the United States](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. [Births: Final Data for 2011, table 16](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Unless otherwise noted Scripture taken from the New King James Version™  
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

Copyright 2013 by Rod Reynolds

[cogmessenger.org](http://cogmessenger.org)

Messenger Church of God  
PO Box 542  
Peculiar, MO 64078  
USA