

Practical Steps to Value People as God Values Them

We know that God loves everyone, and He wants us to love them, too. He also sees people as inherently valuable *all* of the time.

His love and value for humanity is so great that He demonstrated His love toward us while we were still sinners and gave His Son's perfect life to save our imperfect ones (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). He loved us while we were still His enemies (Rom. 5:10). This is the kind of transcendent love that sees people through their current state, not rejecting or judging or arguing, but *loving* them into friendship (John 15:15).

As an imperfect human being in an imperfect world full of imperfect people, is it even possible for us to see the value in every person? On our own strength, maybe not. But thankfully, because we have been redeemed by the generous love of a giving and forgiving God, we too can begin to see others through a heavenly perspective. This takes a commitment to embrace our redeemed, forgiven nature and to choose to see others through His lens, and not through the jaded perspective of this world. By choosing to see others as He sees them, we can help to stop the devaluing trends that are devastating our culture and instead begin to influence our world in the right direction—the perspective of heaven.

1. **Stop the gossip.** In James 3:9-10 (NKJV), the Bible says, "With [our mouth] we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so." We may think to ourselves, "I don't curse anyone!" but how often do we all find ourselves in the throes of idle,

contentious or devaluing talk toward another person? Gossip is, in fact, not innocent. It may feel good in the moment as dopamine chemicals provide a rush of power through the brain and body, but it is powerless and hurtful behavior that causes damage to all involved. Sadly, the gossipers inadvertently reveals his/her own lack of self-worth, value and confidence. You see, you cannot devalue another when you carry a healthy awareness of your own inherent value.

Instead of the harmful habit of devaluing speech, reach for talk that builds up instead of tearing down. Science reveals that we are all wired for love and validation. When we choose to value all of humanity despite their actions or our differences, we will not only experience emotional health for ourselves, but help others to heal. People are innately drawn to carriers of hope. Our ability to bring validation to others reveals who we are on the inside and how our life can actually positively impact the world.

2. Refuse pre-judgement. Prejudice is simply pre-judgement or assumption about something or someone without facts or evidence. Prejudice can move beyond race to include gender, religion, generational stereotypes, socioeconomic status or any difference. Any time we choose to pre-judge someone, we limit our ability to love and value them. We turn off curiosity and turn on often emotionally charged biases; we ultimately divide and cause a chasm of connection, not only for ourselves, but for anyone who hears and follows our assumption. Even the disciples and religious leaders often pre-judged people based upon what had been said about them or who they assumed they were. They called the woman a fool who broke the alabaster jar to wash Jesus' feet with the costly oil. Jesus saw past her reputation and ignored their religiously and culturally acceptable rhetoric, and He saw beyond her imperfections and slated

her forever as one beloved in His story. (Mark 14)

When we begin to truly see people and value them, regardless of their reputation, we'll begin to see them as valuable. When we genuinely ask others enough questions to help us know what it would be like to walk in their shoes, the result is empathy and the dismantling of prejudice. Taking time to listen and learn from another allows us to understand their story, to connect in heart as a fellow human being and to reach beyond judgement to access love. When we can relate and connect to another's journey, prejudice has already taken a giant blow toward defeat.

When we choose to use our lives and our influence to do what is good, we become an instrument of justice in the world and even greater, we become a conduit of heaven on the earth. As we were created for and born into this exact time in history, we have a God-commissioned responsibility to be a light and a voice of hope, love and validation to every person we come into contact with. It starts one thought, one word, one attitude, one choice at a time to set aside our developed patterns of devaluation and instead hear and respond to others through the eyes of heaven.

"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). If that is His heart—that not one would miss out on the opportunity to live in the reality of heaven—than let it be our life's mission to live as living letters of His love.

May we see the value in others as He sees it, treat them as valuable and reap the eternal benefits of a world where every human being knows their worth. {eoa}

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