

What Are Your Core Values in Life?

If you are not familiar with the phrase, let me explain to you exactly what a core value is.

Core values are the fundamental beliefs of a person. These guiding principles often dictate behavior and also help the person to understand the difference between right and wrong ... good and bad ... purposeful and wasteful ... valuable and worthless.

Your core values, when used as a moral map, can help determine whether or not you are on the right path in life.

So let me ask you again: What are your core values in life? Do you have any at all?

Now that I have explained what a core value is, let me give you an example.

I have a dear friend who loves adventure! The commitment to making life an adventure is one of her core values. She has climbed mountains, slept in tents in Africa and gone places that cause my heart to race and my blood pressure to rise. I actually have nightmares about the things that are on this woman's bucket list!

But because she is an adventure junkie, she has accomplished missions that I would never even think about! She works in remote parts of Africa to empower rural women through microenterprise opportunities and the message of the gospel.

All because "adventure" is one of her core values in life.

Perhaps to a homeschool parent, "family" is one of his or her core values in life.

Compassion must be a core value of a doctor or health professional.

I wish integrity and truth were the core values of more politicians!

Thriftiness was a core value to my dad, who was raised during the Depression.

The value of a hearty laugh has always been a core value to my mom who was born during the Depression and lived through the terrifying days of World War II.

The veracity of Scripture and the eternal truth found therein must be a core value to a pastor or to a Bible teacher like me.

As I was contemplating my core values over the past few months, I realized that I have a core value that perhaps I have never before identified. This particular core value has been birthed in me in the battle zones of depression, cancer, infertility, financial challenges, personal rejection and praying for children who have left their faith.

Now, I am ready to state this core value in a bold and assertive manner. What is this newly recognized core value?

It is the importance of thanking God for the hard times in life. To praise Him in the fire. To worship Him in the storm. To stand and say, "I love You, Lord" at the very worst moment of your life.

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which perishes though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you

greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory!" (I Pet. 1:6-8, NIV, author's emphasis).

But let's go back to the beginning and allow me to explain how I got here, how I arrived at being able to sincerely express gratitude to the Lord for the hard times in life.

I try to be a grateful person.

I know the unseen yet rich power of simply having a thankful heart. I have always believed that being aware of one's blessings can turn a gray day into radiant sunshine. A grueling challenge into pure delight. An unwanted trial into rich joy.

I often count my blessings.

Food. Home. Family. Books to read. Clothes to wear. The laughter of children. Flowers blooming on my daily walk. My health. Sweet friends. My Bible. Open doors of ministry. Provision. A legacy of faith passed down to me through my heritage. My piano. The glorious changing of the season. A new grandbaby. The ability to travel. Raspberries.

And the list of undeserved blessings goes on and on and on.

However, as I have been contemplating my core value system, I have been struck by the fact that some of my greatest blessings have come disguised as the most difficult events of my life. (I swallow hard even as I admit that lovely yet aching truth.) So let me say it again:

Some of my greatest blessings in life have come disguised as the most difficult events of my life.

On one hand that statement is filled with rare anguish as I gaze at the battle scars of my life. And yet, even pain stares back at me with all of the beauty of the sun stubbornly shining through a stained-glass window.

I have met the Lord in the hard moments of life, and for that I am profoundly and humbly grateful.

As I sit here writing, and contemplating not only my blessings but also that which has caused me unremitting trauma that lingers even to this day, I am thankful for the valleys in life, for the wretched storms—and for the fierce fires.

I am thankful for the “hard.”

And so, one of my newly identified core values is this: It is vitally important to pause and to thank the Lord for the difficult days in life.

We should never ignore the breathtaking surety that the hard stuff prepares us for the great stuff.

I am abundantly aware of the advantages and the sheer good that has come my way and I must—I simply must—thank God often for the good. But truthfully, I am perhaps more thankful for the disappointments, the pain and the challenges than for any blessing that has made my life easier.

I can say with certainty that it is possible to grow through what you go through in life.

Perhaps my life message is found in these words: “Lord, I am grateful for the adversity I have experienced in life. I am a stronger, more vibrant woman because of it.”

“Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4, NASB).

I will thank God in the fire. I will praise Him in the storm. I will worship in the valley.

“The defining choice to praise Him no matter what—and

especially when life is at its worst—is a core value in my life.

“I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me upon the Rock of Ages.”—Charles Spurgeon {eoa}

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