

—THE—
VALUES
PROJECT

DISCUSSION GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

The Values Project is designed to help us reflect, talk and learn about our identity and values as communities of faith within the Australian Baptist movement. As we are reminded of the values that underpin the historical and cultural backbone of our movement, we reflect on how these values impact our attitudes, practices and decisions in our unique contexts. The Values Project strengthens our sense of identity and encourages connectedness across our movement, and informs decision making and leadership.

Over four sessions, we address four important values by watching a short video and using questions as prompts for discussion.

Before the first session, discuss these introductory questions:

1. Individually, let's describe our personal background and connection to the Baptist movement.
2. Describe the background and connection our organisation, church or group has to the Baptist movement.
3. Briefly identify some of the cultural markers and emerging trends of contemporary Australian society. This discussion reminds us of the broad context in which we exist, operate and serve. We aim to keep these trends in mind throughout the series, so we can explore how the Baptist values are both challenged by and speak into our current context.

SESSION 1

JESUS-CENTRED

Baptists have always emphasised Jesus as the one we are called to follow, the one who reveals God to us, and the one through whom God is at work, reconciling all things. We meet, pray, and speak in his name, and believe Jesus is present with us. Jesus is our ultimate authority and we always seek to be led by him.

Key ideas:

- ✔ Jesus reveals himself to all people, at all times, in all settings
- ✔ Our shared goal is to listen and respond to Jesus
- ✔ We are formed and re-formed by Scripture, through which Jesus speaks and is revealed to us
- ✔ We seek to discern the Spirit's leading together



Discussion:

1. Discuss our initial reflections and responses about the centrality of Jesus as a foundational value for our movement.
2. What challenges do we face in holding on to Jesus' authority in today's society?
3. How does our ongoing formation in Jesus, Scripture and the Holy Spirit provide opportunities and position us well to speak into our context?
4. Discuss some specific examples of how this value shapes our practices and decisions as an organisation, church or group. How might we become more focused on Jesus?
5. Our value of being Jesus-centred informs our decision about _____ in the following ways.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

SESSION 2

COMMUNITY

Our communities are open to everyone, but our identity centres on our shared experience of being followers of Jesus. This key value distinctively shapes our practice in discipleship, discernment, decision making and community building.

Key ideas:

- ✔ We practice baptism and communion as markers of identification with Jesus and the community of faith
- ✔ Each individual follower of Jesus is gifted for ministry
- ✔ We affirm those who are gifted and called into leadership
- ✔ Shared discernment is most effective when we are in relationships of trust, pray together, are responding to the Scriptures and are attentive the Spirit



Discussion:

1. Discuss our initial reflections and responses about community being a foundational value for our movement.
2. How do our practices of membership, leadership and decision-making differ from the dominant practices of group life in our society? What are some of the implications of these differences?
3. How does our value of community enable us to speak positively into our context? Discuss the relevance of our practices in our contemporary society.
4. Discuss some specific examples of how our value of community currently shapes our practices and decisions as an organisation, church or group. How might we embody this value more meaningfully in the future?
5. Our value of community informs our decision about _____ in the following ways.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

SESSION 3

MISSION

As followers of Jesus, we are invited into his mission of making disciples. Our expressions of mission will look different in different places and different times, but we hold on to our core value of making Jesus known in all we say and do, seeing people's lives transformed by him.

Key ideas:

- ✔ The message of Jesus and his Kingdom's reign is good news for everyone
- ✔ We both speak and live out the good news, advocating for the marginalised and vulnerable
- ✔ We empower local communities to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus



Discussion:

1. Discuss our initial reflections and responses about mission being a foundational value for our movement.
2. What challenges do we face in prioritising mission in our contemporary context?
3. How does our value of contextual mission provide opportunities for the transformation of local communities?
4. Discuss some specific examples of how mission is prioritised in our organisation, church or group and how this value influences our practices. Where is there an invitation for us to become more thoughtful and active in mission?
5. Our value of mission informs our decision about _____ in the following ways.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

SESSION 4

FREEDOM

Followers of Jesus live out a different way of being community within our society. We do not try to coerce or manipulate others to live according to our beliefs. We aim to show a way of living that surprises, stimulates questions and invites others to participate. We advocate for the opportunity to speak into our world the hope and flourishing of the gospel, but we always seek to do so with gentleness and respect.

Key ideas:

- ✔ Freedom of conscience allows us to disagree while maintaining relationship
- ✔ Each church or organisation is equipped and competent to live out their mission in their context
- ✔ The Baptist community centres on voluntary relationships of cooperation and accountability in order to have a broader impact
- ✔ We are inspired to have a communal, prophetic voice within our society
- ✔ We advocate for religious freedom for all



Discussion:

1. Discuss our initial reflections and responses about freedom being a foundational value for our movement.
2. What challenges do we face in upholding these ideals in our contemporary contexts, in our organisation, church or group in our society and world?
3. How does our value of freedom provide opportunities for the transformation of local communities?
4. Discuss specific examples of how the value of freedom is expressed in our context and how it shapes our decisions and actions. How might we develop and grow its expression in our group or organisation?
5. Our value of freedom informs our decision about _____ in the following ways.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

After the final session, discuss these closing questions:

1. How have our perceptions of the Baptist movement changed during our engagement with The Values Project?
2. How can we allow our actions to be shaped and reshaped by our ongoing affirmation of these values? What are some specific ideas we can potentially action in the short, medium and long-term?
3. Which of the values did we find the most challenging to reflect upon. Why might that be?

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