

The ELCA Board of Pensions sends all pastors and other rostered church leaders a Health Newsletter from the Mayo Clinic. The December 2008 issue had a brief article about examining our values (I've reprinted it at the end of my letter here).

This got me thinking about New Year's resolutions. "Examining our values" is similar, but is even more important than simple resolutions to lose weight or not to cut people off in traffic. Our values get at the heart of who we are, and who we want to be. This led me to ask, "Do my actions reflect the things that I truly value?" and "Would others be able to list my values by watching what I do?" We can safely answer "Yes" to the second question if we can answer "Yes" to the first one. But we cannot know if our actions reflect our values unless we examine them.

The truth is that our actions are too often unexamined. We do things that used to be important but no longer matter. We spend a lot of time doing things that really aren't that important to us. Reflecting on our values, prioritizing them, and then making decisions about what we will and won't do is a great way to be intentional about our Christian life. The article goes on to suggest that we review them frequently, since our life situation does change from time to time.

The step that I would add is to pray about our priorities and the decisions we make. Let God be a chief player in our review process. Recently we read from 2 Samuel in worship, where David wants to build a temple for the LORD God. He asks his pastor (the prophet Nathan) for advice. Nathan says go for it. But that night Nathan had a dream/vision about it and God told him no. Nathan told David that God had other plans. His son Solomon would be the one to build the temple. And

David's kingdom would last forever (through his descendant Jesus). David's values were right on, his idea was good, but God had other plans. In 2009, may we strive to reexamine our values, but to listen for God's input prayer, scripture, and faithful friends.

Peace,
Pastor Chris

Does your life reflect your values?

Knowing your values – the things that give your life meaning – can help you make decisions and maintain a sense of balance. Use these steps to review your priorities.

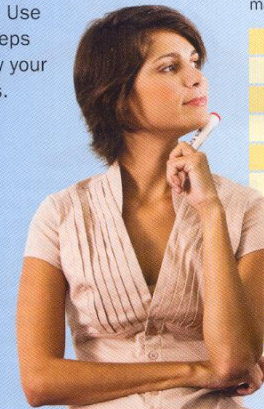
Step 1: Reflect on your values. Use the list provided here to jumpstart your own inventory. Add other values as you wish. You can include as few or as many as you want on your list.

- ✓ Achievement
- ✓ Adventure
- ✓ Commitment
- ✓ Faith
- ✓ Family
- ✓ Financial security
- ✓ Freedom
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Inner peace
- ✓ Recognition
- ✓ Self-reliance
- ✓ Wisdom

Step 2: Prioritize your values. Of the values on your list, which one is your first priority? Your second? Your third? Ranking your values gives you a tool to use when making choices.

Step 3: Use your list to help you make decisions. Perhaps you recorded "family" as your first priority and "achievement" as your second. If that's the case, you may choose to pass on an additional work project in favor of coaching your daughter's soccer team.

Step 4: Review your list regularly. Realize that some of your values may shift over time. While your children are young, family may be your top priority. When your children are grown, your priorities may change.



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