

How Words Can Help Change Your Church Culture

Words create worlds. **Language shapes us and forms us.**

For example: When I say, “*Let’s go to church,*” what does that statement reveal about my understanding of the nature of the church?

Sometimes as leaders we are called to help people move from one deeply held perspective to another. **Words help make that shift possible.** Words build a staircase that allow people to move from where they are to where God wants to lead them.

In leading that kind of “perspective shift” at *the Church*, I recognized that a portion of **our staircase was a little shaky**. It needed to be rebuilt.

Let me explain: in pursuing a God-inspired vision which we call [“One Church, Regional Impact”](#) many have asked, and to some degree are still asking, “**Why?**” I began to recognize that some did not understand the “*Why*” behind the “*What*”. I realized, because of my work with [Auxano](#), that this was a *Values* issue. **Words create worlds**. In this case, words articulate the answer to “*Why?*”

Here’s how we define Values as Missional Motives at [the Church](#):

“In any given day there are a thousand things clamoring for our attention, a multiplicity of motivations that move us. What we value will either direct us back toward center or divert us from what is truly worthwhile. **Values are the motivational flame** of the church. They are the shared convictions that guide actions and reveal our unique strengths. These motives answer “*Why do we do what we do at our church?*” They are springboards for daily action and filters for decision-making. They distinguish our philosophy of ministry and shape our culture and ethos.”

the Church Leadership Guide

[Old] Values

[New] Missional Motives - where everyday life becomes so much more

Growth - We value a lifelong journey with Jesus that results in individual growth and kingdom expansion.

Ordinary+ *because ordinary people connected to Jesus share in Christ's extraordinary mission.*

Relational Service - We value people and the opportunities to meet their individual needs as

an expression of the Gospel.

Step+ *because simple steps guided by Jesus accelerate the impact of new life.*

Authenticity - We value genuine relationships and a sincere Christian lifestyle/behavior.

Friendship+ *because friendships infused with Jesus expand the reach of true community.*

Creativity - We value innovation in ministry.

Generosity+ *because generosity empowered by Jesus fuels a contagious, others-centered culture.*

Every Person a Missionary - We value the personal privilege given to every Jesus-follower to help others live life with Jesus every day.

Home+ *because a home centered on Jesus becomes the epicenter of an active life of faith.*

Here are **3 reasons why we are rearticulating our values.**

The Motives behind our Motivational shift:

1) Our values could be any church's values.

They did not clearly express **OUR** unique motivation.

>> Ask: *What uniquely motivates **your** church?*

2) They didn't help us answer the "Why".

We were never using our value statements as an answer for people when they asked "Why?"

>> Ask: *As a leader in your local context, what "Why" questions are **you** answering?*

3) The words that we chose were not catalytic or compelling.

People did not want to speak them out loud. They did not inspire anyone to participate in creating the culture that those words were trying to shape.

>> Ask: Are **your** values serving as a motivational flame for **your** people?

Read more from Jeff [here](#).