

## Week 1: Beyond Aspirations

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that seemed timely or relevant to you? Was there anything which made you uncomfortable, or with which you disagreed?
2. Review the list of Cedar Ridge values (see over). Which ones do you find most compelling? Which do you find most challenging or even troubling? Are there any strong personal values of yours that are not on this list?
3. In the message on Sunday, we considered flocking behavior in nature as a metaphor for how shared values can hold a community together. What struck you about this metaphor? In what ways could values be controlling or empowering in how they affect a community's behavior?
4. Read the story about a rich young man in Mark 10:17-31 and discuss the following questions:
  - What emotional responses do you observe in the man and what do you think motivates these?
  - The term "eternal life" refers to something bigger and deeper than simply being alive. It could be translated "life without beginning or end." What kind of life do you think the man is looking for?
  - How do you relate to or identify with the man personally?
  - What emotional responses do you observe in Jesus and what do you think motivates these?
  - Jesus quotes selectively from the list of "Ten Commandments" in the Hebrew Scriptures (Exodus 20:1-17). What do you think motivates his selection?
  - What value does Jesus identify in the man and how does the man respond?
  - Why do you think the disciples were so amazed and what do you think is their opinion of the man?
  - What emotional response do you have personally to the man in this story and why?
5. In the version of this story in the Gospel of Luke, the man is described as a "ruler." This could infer that being in a position of power (as well as wealth) means he must be in some kind of collaboration or compromise with the Roman authorities. Take a moment to reflect personally and quietly on how any of your own allegiances, desires, habits, or demands in life might be compromising a value you hold strongly (or want to hold strongly). Then break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate) and each share one area where you feel most challenged in this way. After sharing, spend some time praying for one another.

## Practice for the week: Mindful awareness

This week, make a point of being mindful of any compromise or tension with your values that you identified in the reflection above. Don't judge or blame yourself but just be honestly aware of the conflict and notice when it arises. Invite Jesus into this tension and stay open rather than walking away (as the man does in the story we read). Reflect on what drives the compromising value in you and consciously let it go.

## Cedar Ridge Values

**Love:** This is our highest value and the one that undergirds all our others. Love is what we see in Jesus, the way we define God, and the way we seek to relate to others. As followers of Jesus our journey is ultimately a progressive experience of oneness with God and oneness with one another. For us, love is our final authority and more important than being right. We will disagree on all manner of things, but we will always love.

**Hope:** We celebrate the reality embodied in Jesus that God never gives up on the world or any single one of us. This hope drives our commitment to transformation. As followers of Jesus, we believe we can all become healthier and more loving people, and the world can become a more just and loving place. We choose to believe the best about others, ourselves, and the future, and we work creatively and imaginatively to bring about new realities and possibilities.

**Diversity:** We welcome and treasure our differences embodied in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, culture, age and abilities and intentionally pursue a community culture where everyone has a sense of inclusion and belonging. We honor the different spiritual paths we have each walked and see our differences as a gift because we each have the most to learn from those who are least like us.

**Humility:** We adopt the servant-hearted posture of Jesus in putting others first. We are honest about our weaknesses and mistakes and authentically strive to change. We pursue vulnerability in relationships, and are committed to working through conflict, rather than walking away. While striving to act and speak with integrity, we seek new understandings of ourselves and others rather than proving ourselves right.

**Justice:** We seek to live justly and work for justice in our relationships, our communities, and in society as whole. We express this personally (being the change we want to see in world) through our behaviors, what we buy, what we consume, and how we treat both people and nature. We express this corporately through the struggle against systems that perpetuate racial, economic, social and environmental injustice.

**Journey:** We see life as a journey and all of us are in process. That means none of us are the finished article so we can have patience with ourselves and others. Transformation takes time, so we are committed to faithful practice and not giving up. We embrace mystery and acknowledge the role of both faith and doubt in our journey, recognizing that it takes us into both new understandings as well as new uncertainties. So we remain openhearted and openminded: to God and to one another.