



Questions for Reflection and Discussion

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 (next page). 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.

Week 2: And the Greatest of These is Love

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. Read our value statement for "Love" below:

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.

- Discuss what this means to you practically.
 - How do you relate to the statement "love is our final authority and more important than being right"? In what ways could this be a unifying way to live? In what ways could it be problematic?
3. Read 1 John 4:7-16 and discuss:
 - What does this passage say about God with regard to love?
 - What does it say about the human experience of love?
 - How does Jesus' life and death impact the human experience of love according to this passage?
 - According to this passage how can we practice and embody love?
 4. Read 1 John 4:18-21 and discuss:
 - In what ways might fear be the antithesis of love?
 - How do you see fear playing out in human history (and the human experience in general) as anti-love?
 - How do you see fear playing out in your own life both past and present? What has been the impact?
 - What does this passage say about the antidote to fear? How could you engage with this more in your own life?
 5. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate). Read the scripture from the prayer practice overleaf and pray for one another to experience more of God's spirit and love with regard to the areas of fear in our lives.

Practice for the week: Awareness of oneness

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Romans 8:14-16 (NIV)

This week, take a moment each day to be mindful that you are a "child of God," completely loved, and one with God. Read the above passage and sit quietly. Focus on your breath as the very presence and spirit of God and breathe it in. As you breath out, let go of any fearful, anxious, or negative thoughts about yourself and return to a center of complete acceptance and belonging. Invite God's spirit to resonate with your spirit and increase the amplitude of your conscious oneness with God.

Week 3: Our Individual and Collective Journeys

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you? Was there anything that seemed puzzling or with which you disagreed?
2. How does the analogy of life as a journey relate to your current situation? Do you feel like it is a steep uphill climb? Plain sailing? Slogging through mud? A pleasant stroll? Why do you feel this way?
3. Read our value statement for "Journey" below:

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.

- What stands out to you from this statement?
 - What parts of it do you struggle with?
4. If you have already completed the values exercise, discuss the following:
 - Did you find it easy to select your most important values?
 - Were you clear in your mind what each of them meant to you personally?
 - When you reflected on how you displayed and lived out your values during three consecutive days, were you surprised by the results?
 - Did you make any changes to your list of values based on your reflections through the week?
 5. How did "mystery" rank in your list of values, and why? Regardless of how you personally ranked "mystery," why do you think it is helpful to have it as a community value? How might it not be helpful?
 6. Read Matthew 11:28-30 and Matthew 16:24-25, Which of these two passages speaks to you most right now, and why? Take some time to pray for one another regarding what is shared.

Practice for the week: Identifying our Values

If you have not yet completed the “Identifying Your Values” and “Taking an Inventory of Your Values” exercises, try to complete them this week. You can find them here: www.crrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/My-Values.docx

If you have already completed the exercise, evaluate your values:

- Look at your list of values. How do these values relate to following Jesus? Are there any values that Jesus would challenge?
- Draw up a list of general ways you spend your time (work, family, leisure, church, etc.) and try to assign how many hours a week you spend on each.
- How do these activities provide opportunities for you to live your values? How do they stifle or misalign with your values?
- Are there changes you could make to increasingly live out your values and be your “true self”?

Week 4: Diversity and Justice

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. Discuss the personal values exercise from last week
 - Did you find it easy to select your most important values?
 - Were you clear in your mind what each of them meant to you personally?
 - When you reflected on how you displayed and lived out your values during three consecutive days, were you surprised by the results?
 - Did you make any changes to your list of values based on your reflections through the week?
3. How did our community values of “Diversity” and “Justice” rank in your personal values list and why?
4. Read our value statement for “Diversity” below:

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.

- What stands out to you about this statement?
 - What are the greatest challenges currently for us to grow in this value as a community?
 - Do you feel a sense of “belonging” at Cedar Ridge? What strengthens that for you? What impedes “belonging” for you?
5. Read Galatians 3:28 and Revelation 7:9-11. These passages present two visions of diversity. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? Each present different categories of humanity—what might be modern day equivalents?
 6. Read our value statement for “Justice” below:

We seek to live justly and work for justice in our relationships, our communities, and in society as a whole. We express this personally (being the change we want to see in the 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.

- What stands out to you about this statement?

- What are the greatest challenges currently for us to grow in this value as a community?
 - How could justice strengthen diversity in a community and create a more equitable sense of belonging? In what ways could justice inhibit diversity?
7. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate) and pray for one another in light of what you shared from the personal values exercise (or anything that came up in today's discussion).

Practice for the week: Breath Prayer

This week, take a moment each day to be mindful of your oneness with others—friends, enemies, family, neighbors—everyone. Read the passage below and sit quietly. Focus on your breath as the very presence and spirit of God, and breathe it in. As you breathe out, let go of fear, resentment, competition, and insecurity. Invite God's spirit to increase compassion in you for others and allow whatever barriers might exist to dissolve. Throughout the day be aware of moments when you see someone as "other" and return to this consciousness of oneness.

No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us. If we love each other, God's love has reached its goal. It is made perfect in us. We know that we live in God and God lives in us. We know this because God gave us his Spirit.

1 John 4:12-13 (ICB)

Week 5: Hope and Humility

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 that made you uncomfortable, or with which you disagreed?

2. Read our value statement for "Hope" below:

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.

- What stands out to you about this statement?
 - When you think about your own life, do you feel hopeful? Why or why not?
 - When you look at the state of the world, do you feel hopeful? Why or why not?
 - What are the greatest challenges currently for us to grow in this value as a community?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-18. What might this statement be saying about a possible trajectory of history?
 4. In the message on Sunday, we considered hope as being an attitude and an action in the present moment rather than trying to control the future.
 - How might this kind of hope change our outlook on the future?
 - How might looking back to the past positively influence our outlook in the present?

5. Read our value statement for "Humility" below:

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.

- What stands out to you about this statement?
 - What do you find most challenging about it?
 - What are the greatest challenges currently for us to grow in this value as a community?
6. Read Philippians 2:1-11. What does this passage suggest is the means by which we can adopt a posture of humility? What does humility look like here? How might this passage give us hope for ourselves and humanity?

7. Read this ancient commentary on Micah 6:8 from Rabbinic Jewish tradition in the Pirkei Avot:

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

- a. How could this approach to life give us hope?
 - b. How could this approach to life cause us to be more humble?
 - c. In what ways does having hope require humility?
 - d. In what ways could a humble posture make us more hopeful?
8. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate) and pray for one another in light of today's discussion.

Practice for the week: Practicing Hope and Humility in the Present Moment

This week, make a point of consciously adopting a posture of hope and humility by practicing small acts of love. At the beginning of each day, reflect again on the quote from the Pirkei Avot:

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

As you go about your day be conscious of the following:

- Moments when you feel yourself withhold from doing something loving and good because you doubt it will ultimately have a positive outcome. Do it anyway.
- Moments when you look at the world around you or even at yourself and feel despairing about the future. Remind yourself that hope means never abandoning the way of love, which you are empowered to practice in this present moment.