

Core Values

Love is the central theme running throughout the bible, and forming the basis of our core values. The two greatest commandments are:

1. Love YHVH your God with all your heart, and all your soul and all your might (Deu. 6:5).
2. Love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18)

In neither case is love mere abstraction. It is kindness in action, supported by kindness in motivation.

We accept YHVH, the God of the Hebrew scriptures, as the Creator of the universe, our loving Father and our King, deserving of our worship, and we express our love for him by keeping his commandments (Deu. 5:10, John 14:15), day in, day out (Deu. 6), by teaching them to our children (Deu. 6:7) and by setting an example to those around us (Deu. 4:7). We express our love for our neighbor by our kindness, assistance and sacrifice on behalf of others. Yehoshua demonstrated the ultimate sacrifice which he also taught in John 15:13, "Greater love than this has no one, that anyone should lay down his soul for his friends." While some are called upon to literally give their lives for others, more often we have the opportunity to show God's love by sacrificing our time, ambitions or resources for our family, friends and community.

God's Instructions

Our goal is to approach each of God's instructions with a "can do" attitude. We believe that, through his great wisdom, YHVH created his laws to help people live in harmony, to keep us healthy and to teach us how he wants to be worshipped. Certain instructions, such as caring for the afflicted, honoring parents and the dietary laws, are straightforward (though not necessarily easy) to apply. Other instructions, such as the Sabbath and tithing, are also clear and fundamental, though the details require some interpretation. Still other commandments (such as the new moons) are inferred or alluded to, but the exact requirements of the law may not be obvious at all. When we encounter a new instruction, rather than asking, "Must we do this?" we cultivate a mindset of, "How can we best apply this as an individual and/or as a community?"

The Sabbath and Moedim (Holidays or Appointed Times)

The Moedim or God's Appointed Times (Lev. 23) are fundamental to our ability as a community to gather and to worship God on his terms. They are also fundamental way-markers for us as individuals, keeping us on track and giving us regular opportunities to recalibrate and to refocus our lives on God's way. We strive to

observe these days as instructed, by abstaining from labor (professional or otherwise) on the weekly Shabbat, as well as on the various annual Shabbats and Shabbatons. We also avoid commerce on these days (Neh. 10:31, 15:13-21), and instead use the time to rest (Deu. 5:14), to congregate for study (Lev. 23:2) and worship (Isa. 58:13, Isa. 66:23), and to free each other and ourselves from the burdens that we carry throughout the week (Jer. 17:21-27, Luke 13:14-16).

Family

Strong families are the building blocks of strong communities as attested to by the countless number of families that God worked with throughout the Bible and by our own experience. God's promise to create a nation for himself began with a family (the family of Abraham and Sarah). Because families are the core and future of the community, one of our primary preoccupations is the support and promotion of health family relationships. To this end, we do not compromise on the Biblical definition of marriage, holding that it is between one woman and one man and is binding until the death of either spouse (Rom. 7:2-3, 1 Co. 7:39). While divorce is sometimes permitted, and even necessary, a divorce does not make either spouse eligible for remarriage. As Yehoshua states in Mark 10:12 and Luke 16:18, anyone who marries a divorcee, while the prior spouse is living, is entering into an adulterous relationship.

Crucial among our goals is to teach and demonstrate to our children what Godly marriages look like, to support those experiencing difficulties in marriage, and to encourage and include those who are committed to remaining single or being reconciled after a prior failed marriage.

Yehoshua

We accept that Yehoshua is a uniquely generated son of YHVH, born in the flesh, as recounted by the four Gospels, who came to demonstrate his Father's love through perfect adherence to the Torah. Throughout his time on the earth, he gave us a living example of how we should conduct ourselves and consistently directed attention to his Father. Yehoshua taught that he had come to do the will of his Father, as should we, and that his Father was greater than him (John 14:28, Luke 22:29, 1 Co. 15:24). He taught directly from the Torah and Prophets, sometimes explaining the intricacies of certain laws, and at other times, shedding light on the broader intent and spirit of others. As Yehoshua stated in Mat. 5:18 and Luke 16:17, he did not abolish a single law while he was here, but he instead offered himself as a sacrifice in the place of anyone who would receive it. This sacrifice opened the door for salvation through God's grace. While we are still obligated to repent and follow God's will, through observation of his law, we are now eligible for a divine pardon from the eternal death penalty, which we inevitably incur as a result of breaking the law.

Biblical Interpretation

We hold the five books of Moshe, the Torah, as the foundational expression of God's law and therefore the most authoritative source for all questions of biblical

interpretation. We recognize that the bible, as it exists today, has not been preserved exactly in its original form. Therefore, we continually strive for a deeper, intimate understanding of the text in its entirety, in the original languages, to facilitate a sound, holistic view of the teachings contained therein.

People of Action

Faith in YHVH is evidenced through one's actions. While we certainly place a high value on biblical literacy and thorough scholarship, God's way is performance-based. This is emphasized repeatedly in the bible:

- ◆ "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." [Yochanan (John) 13:17]
- ◆ "So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself. But someone will say, you have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith out of my works." [Ya'akov (James) 2:17-18]
- ◆ "For I hungered and you gave me food to eat. I thirsted and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in, naked, and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me." [Matityahu (Matthew) 25:35-36]

Our abiding and central focus is on living God's word, through obedience to him and kindness toward those around us, both within the religious community and without.