

Our — Values.

Study Guide



CHURCH

The Church-Wide Values of

LOCAL CHURCH

What's the difference between KFC and Chic-fil-a? They both primarily serve chicken. They both have drive-thrus. They both have red and white in their logo. Yet, you would probably agree they are very different restaurants. Why is that? Is it the recipes? Or the polite greetings (My pleasure!)? That's part of it. But we think the main thing that sets them apart is culture.

What is culture?

Here's Webster's definition:

cul·ture

/ˈkəlCHər/

1. the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.
2. the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.

We define it like this: **Culture is how we behave based on what we believe.** In other words, whatever we are convinced is true eventually manifests itself in what we do.

You move in and out of different cultures all the time. Your school has a particular culture. So does your job, your church, your favorite restaurant, and so on. Everywhere you go there is a set of shared beliefs that dictate the way people behave. In a library, for instance, everyone keeps their voice down because they're convinced that the library is a place for study. At your home, people might be convinced that the best way to be heard is to raise your voice, so your home might get loud. That's part of your culture.

Most cultures just kind of happen. Nobody really plans them. Some cultures happen on purpose, like the library. We want to be intentional about the culture of Local Church. We do this by codifying what we **value** and intentionally leading toward that. In section one of this study guide you will take a look at our three 'church-wide' values. This is the culture we want everyone to immediately experience when they walk through the doors. We want to create an environment where we elevate honesty, honor, and fun.



The concept of creating a culture might seem strange or confusing to you but the stakes are actually pretty high, especially if we want to be a church that unchurched people love.

These days, great music, and a great sermon are just part of creating a successful church. The truth is, you can get the greatest teaching, and a curated playlist of all your favorite songs on demand, right on your phone from the comfort of your lazy boy recliner. But what you can't get is the irresistible culture that only takes place when followers of Jesus gather together and commit to loving one another just like Jesus loved us. But as you're probably aware, churches don't always get that right. That's why we've got to make culture a priority.

Music and teaching are good, but they're not the only reason somebody stays (or leaves) when they visit a church. Let's face it, pretty much every church has music and teaching. What really makes people come back is 'a vibe', 'a feeling', 'a warmth'. All words used to describe culture.

Think about your last "church shopping" experience. You wanted good teaching, but you also wanted to avoid creepy vibes. At Local Church we're going to do our best to create a culture that we think is most inviting to the unchurched people of Long Island, and most conducive to their growth as a follower of Jesus. Because our mission is to inspire people to follow Jesus by being a church that unchurched people love.

Let's dive in.

Day 1

BE HONEST

It's not always easy to be honest. Being real with God about your doubts. Confessing sin to a friend. Admitting to yourself that you really aren't as funny as you wish you were. These are things that would probably be way easier to just ignore. And yet, followers of Jesus are expected to be honest anyway. Honest to God, honest to ourselves, and honest to each other.

Brainstorm everything that comes to mind when you think about honesty:

Can you think of a time when you were honest in a difficult situation? What was the outcome of your decision to be honest?

Write John 8:31-32 here. Circle any words or phrases that relate to honesty:

According to Jesus, truth, or honesty, is the beginning of freedom. We think that's because it brings us face-to-face with whatever is holding us back, giving us the ability to turn it over to Jesus so that He can deal with it. At Local Church, we will be honest so that God can set us free and help us grow. Sometimes it's uncomfortable. Oftentimes it will require courage. But ultimately it is worth it.

Why do you think a church dedicated to being honest might matter to unchurched people?

Read Romans 12:3. Do you tend to think you are better than you really are? If so, why do you think that is?

Is there anything in your life that you're not quite being honest about? Maybe it's sin, doubt, weaknesses, or something you know God wants you to do. What is your next step to being honest? Who is someone you could talk to about this?

Use the space below to take an inventory of how you can be honest. Include ways you already kill it in each area as well as ways you can grow.

WITH YOURSELF

WITH OTHERS

WITH GOD

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Research and record other examples in scripture of God placing a high value on being honest.

Fun Fact: Jesus used the phrase "I tell you the truth" over 60 times in the Gospels.

Day 2

HONOR OTHERS

Honor simply means to respect someone and hold them in great esteem. It can be easy to Honor others when they deserve to be honored. But it can be nearly impossible to honor someone who is just not very honorable. Or worse, someone who would never honor you back. Yet, followers of Jesus are required to honor others, especially when they don't deserve it. This can be a hard pill to swallow, but it helps to remember what God did for us even when we didn't deserve it.

When you think about how God views you, what are some words, phrases, or pictures that come to mind?:

Read Genesis 5:1-2, Ephesians 2:10, Galatians 4:7, & 1 John 4:9-10. How do these verses compare to what you wrote or drew? Did anything in particular about these verses stand out to you?:

Honor is what happens when you see someone the way God sees them: made in His likeness, His masterpiece, His children, the ones He sent His Son to die for. At Local Church, we will honor others because we will choose to see people the way God sees them, even when they make it difficult. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:10: 'Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.' In verse 17 he elaborates: 'Never pay back evil for evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.'

Do you find it difficult to honor certain people? Why or why not?

How does God view the person(s) that you find difficult to honor? Is it hard for you to think of Him loving them enough to die for them? Why or why not?

Read 1 Peter 2:12. Why do you think your ability to honor others is important for an unbeliever who might be observing your life?

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Go to biblegateway.com and search "temple of the Holy Spirit". What scripture comes up? What does this have to do with Honor?

Day 3

HAVE FUN

Are you allowed to have fun as a follower of Jesus? Depending on how you grew up, your faith, or your perception of faith, might have been best described in one word: boring. Is that what God had in mind for His followers? We don't think so.

How would you define fun?

What are some synonyms for the word "fun" according to your definition?

Write John 10:10b ('b' stands for the second half of the verse):

Does Jesus's purpose statement surprise you at all? Why or why not?

Can you remember a time when having fun felt wrong? Why do you think that was?

At Local Church we define fun as enjoying everything that is good in life (including God, and church), celebrating a lot, and not taking ourselves too seriously. Do you agree with this definition of fun? Why or why not?

How do you think this will translate into the way we do church? Small groups? Events? Reaching unchurched people?

This idea of fun didn't originate with us. In fact, Jesus performs his first miracle in the midst of a scene that we would describe as fun! Read John 2:1-12 and note how this event demonstrates fun in the following 3 ways:

Celebration

Not taking ourselves too seriously

Enjoying good in life

How might this scene have been shocking to religious leaders in Jesus' day? How might this be reflected in how some "religious" people understand their faith today?

Additional Study: Check out Psalm 118:22-24, John 16:22, Psalm 16:11, Philippians 4:4-5, Romans 12:11-12,15

The Team Values of

LOCAL CHURCH

By now, you might be thinking, 'Those are nice values but what about prayer, reading the Bible, grace, God's glory, discipleship, community, Christ-centeredness, missions, etc...?'

That's a great thought. And the truth is, we do value all of those things. But those things are what leadership expert Patrick Lencioni calls 'permission-to-play' values. They are standards that every church should value, therefore they don't do much to clarify our specific culture.

Granted, our church-wide values of honesty and honor could certainly be placed in the permission-to-play bin, but the general rule is that if you believe your culture reflects a permission-to-play value more than 90% of others, then it's an acceptable clarifier. We're shooting for that.

Now, alongside our church-wide values, we also have a set of 'team values'. These are the values we'll be looking into more the next few days.

What sets apart our 'team values' from our 'church-wide' values is responsibility. 'Team values' are reserved for those who actively serve at Local Church. That includes the oversight team, the lead pastor, the staff, and the volunteers. If you have responsibility at Local Church, you will be expected to carry out the 'team values' in your role.

In addition to our church-wide values we want every team member at Local Church to be passionate about *acting like an owner*, *expecting the 7 out of 10*, and *getting better*.



Let's dive in.

Day 4

ACT LIKE AN OWNER

Can you think of a company, church, or organization that has employees who seem *really* sold out for what they do? Describe the attributes or behaviors of those employees:

What is it about those people that sets them apart from an employee who isn't as sold out?

Ownership is different from employment. Owners see differently, act faster, and modify their attitude when they have to. The stakes are higher for an owner. They are ultimately responsible for not just one department but the organization as a whole. Most owners show up on time, get it done, and welcome innovation. **What if everyone at Local Church decided to act like an owner instead of a volunteer or employee?** God has granted the church *ownership* over making disciples of all the nations. At Local Church, we're going to take that responsibility seriously by acting like owners.

Read Matthew 28:18-20. What are your thoughts on these instructions from Jesus?

Does it surprise you that God chose his disciples (YOU) as the primary means for inspiring people to follow Jesus? What other ways (natural or supernatural) could God have used to tell the world about Himself?

Have you taken ownership of this great commission to make disciples? Why or why not? How could you improve?

In the church, taking ownership is not *always* going to look like baptizing and teaching. We believe that every volunteer, no matter their role, has an opportunity to take ownership of their position. Think of 3 different volunteer roles within the church and brainstorm a list of practical ways that a volunteer can act like an owner in that role.

POSITION: _____

POSITION: _____

POSITION: _____

Did you know that right before He was arrested, Jesus specifically prayed for you? Read John 17:18-21 and reflect on how Jesus' prayer communicated his desire for his followers to "act like owners."

Do you think it is important to unbelievers that the church takes ownership over what Jesus has called us to do?

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Can you think of any other passages of scripture that demonstrate the value of acting like an owner?

Day 5

EXPECT THE 7 OUT OF 10

1,116,459 — or 7 out of 10 — people in Suffolk County are what we call unchurched. That means they don't regularly attend a church. Some despise it. Others simply find it irrelevant or boring. And some just haven't really given it much thought.

Do you love anything today that you used to seriously dislike? It could be food, a place, a company, a style, a habit, a tv show, a friend group, etc. What changed your mind?

Did you ever feel like church was irrelevant or boring? What were your thoughts about church then? If you love church now, what changed your perspective?

When the church first started in the first century it was made up of Jews. Men and women who were accustomed to following the law of the old testament in order to please God - things like getting circumcised and observing the sabbath. This led to some confusion when people like the apostle Paul started planting churches in places where people weren't Jewish and therefore weren't practicing the law. Some church leaders began arguing that these foreigners must follow the law in order to be considered followers of Jesus. Read this fascinating debate in Acts 15:1-19. Pay close attention to verse 10 and verse 19.

What stands out to you about this debate?

How might this be similar to what is debated in some churches today?

We want Local Church to be a group of people that unchurched people love. Meaning, we want people who don't like church to be attracted to our church. Not because we're cooler and trendier than all the other churches out there, but because we work really hard at removing unnecessary obstacles. We won't make it difficult for anyone to turn to God. That means we have to actually want them there. We will prepare for them and be ready when they interact with us. It will require more work for us because it is more natural to be insider-focused. But in the end, it will be so worth it to see people inspired to follow Jesus.

Can you think of examples of times when Jesus was attractive to people who were nothing like Him? How did He treat them?

Can you think of examples where Jesus adjusted his approach for people who were considered outsiders?

What are some things about your life that would be different if it wasn't for the influence of your local church? (For example: what would you not know, who would you not know, what experiences would you have missed out on, etc.)

Day 6

KEEP GETTING BETTER

Isn't it strange to think about how everything around you is aging? With every passing second, we grow older. And there's nothing we can do to stop it. *But we can choose how we will grow.* We can either let growth happen to us, or we can seize the time and choose to grow on purpose. Following Jesus implies movement away from where we are and toward something different - something better. Followers of Jesus are challenged to grow in faith, in love, and in ministry.

Who comes to mind when you think of someone who seems to keep getting better? Why?

GROW IN FAITH

In 2 Peter 1:3-11, Peter tells us to make every effort to respond to God's promises. Take a moment to read that passage now. Write 2 Peter 1:5-7 below and underline every way that Peter says we should grow:

What does Peter say will happen as we grow like this?

GROW IN LOVE

The night before He was crucified, Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment. Read John 13:34-35. How does obeying this commandment require constant growth?

Why is Jesus's new command important for the unbelievers in our lives?

GROW IN MINISTRY

If you're not growing, you're dying. Not only is this true biologically, but it's also true for organizations. Once a business or church stops getting better it's just a matter of time before they die. Things are changing faster than ever before. We won't change our message but we must be willing to change our approach if we're going to get our message out there. Part of getting better is being willing to let go of what's not working and embracing change. This takes courage and strong leaders who are willing to keep getting better.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 Paul uses sports imagery to illustrate the importance of training and getting better. Why is Paul so passionate about this?

As followers of Jesus, we should be growing in our **faith, love, and ministry.**

In which area do you have the most room for growth? How can you take your next step? Brainstorm in the space below

FAITH

LOVE

MINISTRY



**Long Island
as it is in Heaven**