

Background - Vox's Values

<Provide some context on why we're talking about Vox's Values.>

We are in the middle of a sermon series exploring the values of Vox. These values are meant to describe who we are in this season and who we hope to be as a community and individuals. They have risen to the surface over the course of our journey as a church. It is from these values of who we are, that should shape what we do and how we live. Vox's values include: Artistry, Posture, Empathy, Participation, Peculiarity and Mystery.

Peculiarity: Session 5 Objectives

Send out the link to the sermon podcast to your group ahead of time so everyone can get a chance to listen to the sermon on Peculiarity.

- <http://voxveniae.com/peculiarity/>

These objectives might be helpful in shaping and guiding the discussion to a healthy landing spot by the end of the night.

- Reflect on the implications of holiness in the context of performance and judgment.
- Reframe our understanding of holiness in the context of love and grace.
- Reflect on how we can view others, including enemies, through the lens that they are made in the image of God.

Value of Peculiarity

Introduce the value statement of Peculiarity and if it's helpful for your group, reflect on the Scripture passage in Matthew 5.

Read/Reflect on Matthew 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Reflection on Peculiarity

Spend some time reflecting the value of Peculiarity. This can be a time to reflect on the value statement, the Scripture passage and the sermon podcast.

- 1. How does the value of Peculiarity connect or not connect with you?**
- 2. How have you experienced or seen this value demonstrated in the Vox community?**
- 3. Was there anything that stood out for you in the sermon?**

Read the value statement for Peculiarity to the group.

Peculiarity. In the Sermon on the mount, Jesus gives us a picture of what our Christian communities should be striving towards. Holiness has been hijacked by rule based legalism/ fundamentalism. For us, to be set apart, is to live a life worthy of the calling we've received, messing up along the way, then limitlessly forgiving each other. This is strange and peculiar. Radically loving our enemies is the gold standard of holiness. It's the ultimate difference in a darwinian, disposable world. This is our vision for the world Jesus came to restore today, bit by bit, and a world we want to live in. We seek to relentlessly offer grace to ourselves, one another and the world around us.

Flipping the Script of Holiness

Some of us grew up in a church environment and culture that emphasized holiness in the context of performance and judgement. This usually led to an focus of external spirituality and making sure we did and said all the right things.

4. What has holiness meant in past experiences? How did we learn about what holiness is?

This might be an opportunity to reflect on how unhealthy expressions or understanding of holiness has shaped our rhythms and perspectives of spirituality.

Tension of Grace and Forgiveness

Given the message of the Sermon on the Mount and the teachings of Jesus, spend some time reflecting on how we might understand holiness in the context and tension of grace and forgiveness.

EXERCISE: Reframing Holiness in the Context of Grace

5. What are the tensions of holiness in the context of grace and forgiveness?

6. How would you describe peculiarity (holiness) in the context of grace? How would you reframe the practice and expression of holiness in the context of grace and forgiveness?

Spend some time reflecting on the tensions and practices that peculiarity (holiness) invite us to, based on the teaching and life of Christ.

Practice (Application)

Spend the remaining time reflecting on personal practice and what it means to live a peculiar life of grace to ourselves and those around us.

7. What is an area or opportunity where you can practice and express the value of Peculiarity? *(How does your Enneagram type impact your ability to practice Peculiarity?)*

For example, as a three (achiever), peculiarity can be difficult because of the natural draw towards legalism and perfection if it is simply about accomplishing and "being successful" at holiness.

8. In what ways can Vox continue to foster and facilitate this value?

Prayer

Close your time in prayer for any reflections that came from this time of dialogue and also allow space for any personal areas that require care.

Appendix - Other Resources

Vox Sermon Podcast

- Vox Podcast - Values: Peculiarity (Weylin Lee)
 - <http://voxveniae.com/peculiarity/>
- Sermon Content
 - Jesus' understanding of holiness and perfection is in the context of love and grace, not judgment and performance
 - Why are we invited into this peculiar practice of loving our enemy?
 - 1. It reminds us to look for the image of God in everyone
 - Theology of love and hate - hate is not seeing image of God in people
 - Invited to look through a lens that can find reflection of image of God (find true self under all the layers)
 - Practice praying for enemies (forces us to look at God first and then bring in enemy into the frame)
 - 2. It reminds us that we are all recipients of Grace
 - God's love isn't dependent on what we do or what we don't do
 - Easier to create framework of judgment to control who deserves love
 - Jesus tells us not to judge, but to look at the plank in our own eye (Thomas Merton quote)
 - Jesus story - whoever forgiven with greater debt will love more
 - Practice reflecting on where we've received grace and where we needed grace
 - 3. It invites us to be free from codependency
 - Out love is self-serving and we go back to our safe comfortable circle of relationships
 - Jesus invites us to do spiritual practices in secret to free us from performance-based faith
 - Practice anonymity - act of love or generosity anonymously
 - Reflection Questions:
 - 1. In what ways do my enemies reflect the image of God?
 - 2. Where have I experienced grace in my life this week? Where have I needed grace this week?
 - 3. How can I practice an act of love or generosity anonymously this week?
 - Resources:
 - Podcast – [LL Bean Return Policy](#) (This American Life)
 - Video – [The 100 Years Show](#)

Other Resources

“There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.”

— Eugene Peterson (*A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*)