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## Session One: Exploring Values

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### Description

The first of the Benedictine Practices is about love. Most major religions believe that we are called to love God and to love other people. Christians believe that we carry God's love with us, which means that others can experience God's love through our words or actions – sometimes through kindnesses. Loving people through our actions can be a way of doing justice in the world – taking what we have and using it to care for other people, whether it be the people in our own family, or our figurative or literal neighbor. We may think of justice as revenge or getting even. But what if, in God's economy, justice looked like love?

In this session you will start to explore your family's core values. As you do this, think about which (if any) any of your core values have to do with love.

It's best to go into this activity with an open mind and heart. Family members (such as grown children) may disagree on what your core family values should be. You might also find that you agree, but you may not currently be living those values out and need to make some changes. This is an amazing opportunity to practice how we respectfully work through differences and come to an agreed upon solution. Listening will be an important skill to use here.

Small children might need some guidance in understanding what a "value" is. You may need to gently help them put their values into words. For example, they might list "playing together" as a core value. In this case one of their core values might be time spent together / relationship.

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### Materials Needed

Stack of sticky notes, pens or pencils, large poster board or large paper and a timer. Feel free to open and close each session with prayer or meditation if that fits for your family. Colors and paper for smaller kids.

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### Handouts

None

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## What are our family's core values?

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### Read aloud the quote or scripture

"To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times, what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks, but a special heart that listens." - Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson

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### Questions for discussion (10 minutes)

1. What is love?
2. Where does love come from?
3. What are the inward signs of love? Outward?
4. Is God involved in love? If so how? If not, why not?
5. What do you think it means to have a listening heart?

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### Rule of life activity

1. Give five sticky notes to each person in the family
2. Explain (with younger kids) what a "value" is.

*For adults: "Core values represent your highest priorities, deeply held beliefs, and core, fundamental driving forces."<sup>1</sup>ie; The things your family cares about the most. Your core values should shape the vision for your family and reflect your identity as a family. For a small child you might say: "Values are the things that matter the most to our family."*

3. Instruct each person to quietly (alone) select the five things that they think **your family** values the most and write one of those values on each of their five sticky notes. ie; One value per sticky note, five sticky notes = five values.
4. Come back together. One at a time, each person puts their five values on the poster board and tells the group why they chose those values. Remember these are not your personal values, you are trying to come up with your core **family** values.

*Younger children might write things like "pets" or "playing". Affirm these values and let the kids explain why those values are important to them. Don't argue or correct them.*

5. Now talk about the values on the board. Do you agree? Disagree?

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<sup>1</sup> Core values are the fundamental beliefs of a person or organization. These guiding principles dictate behavior and can help people understand the difference between right and wrong. Core values also help to determine if families are on the right path and fulfilling their goals by creating an unwavering guide. There are many different examples of core values in the world, depending upon the context.

6. Discuss and choose as a family your 4 core values that each of the values fit into.
7. Write those four core values at the top of the paper or poster board.
8. Move all the sticky notes under their overarching value category.
9. You will now have four overarching core values for your family with a bunch of sticky notes under each category.
10. Talk about how many of those core values your family is doing well now. What actions are you taking now as a family that demonstrate that core value? What do you aspire to?
11. Should any change? Does everyone agree that those should be your family's core values?
12. Once everyone agrees on your family's 4 core values write a statement on a piece of paper: Our family values \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. Color or decorate it if you'd like! Younger kids can also draw / color a picture of your family values.
13. Put that paper up on the wall, the fridge, or somewhere everyone in the family can see it.
14. In Session Two, your family will begin talking more deeply about the core values you chose and what it might look like to live out your core values.

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## Examen

How did it go? Debrief highs and lows

1. Each person shares their favorite part of the conversation / activity and why.
2. Each person shares their least favorite part and why.

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**Serving /giving ideas for any time this week: Choose one or create your own. These can be done individually or as a group. You will be sharing your serving experience in the next session.**

- Compliment someone this week (genuinely).
- Leave an umbrella at a bus stop with a nice note attached to it.
- Let someone go before you (in line, at a meal etc.).
- Leave a kind note of encouragement for someone in your family, a friend, teacher, coworker or a neighbor.