

The Values that Matter Most to Us

Good morning! This is the third part in our series we're calling "We are Family". So far, we've learned a few things from the Bible about our church. First, Fil-Am Church, is a church that is composed of believers in Christ, those who have been called to belong to the universal, invisible body of Christ. Nevertheless, we meet in a local place, and we are identified as Southern Baptists just like other local churches that are identified as Lutherans, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, and what-have-you. The label is not important. What is important is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Then, we also learned that each person in the church has five purposes which God has determined them to fulfill. These purposes are the same purposes of the church and the church's role is to help each person fulfill their purposes.

Today, we're going to look at another aspect of the church's life. And this pertains to "The Values that Matter Most to Us as a Church". Which is the title of this message. Now, for sure, there's a lot of values that I can discuss with you but I've chosen only a few for the sake of time. I think these are the most important things we have to consider. And I'd like to share these with investment in mind. Meaning, these values are investments that will surely reap rewards.

So, let me start with this illustration.

A young man asked an old rich man how he made his money.

The old guy fingered his worsted wool vest and said, "Well, son, it was 1932. The worst year of the Great Depression. I was down to my last nickel. I invested that nickel in an apple. I spent the entire day polishing the apple and, at the end of the day, I sold the apple for ten cents."

"The next morning, I invested those ten cents in two apples. I spent the entire day polishing them and sold them at 5:00 pm for 20 cents. I continued this system for a month, by the end of which I'd accumulated a fortune of \$1.37."

"Then my wife's father died and left us two million dollars."

Sounds like that guy made a good investment, didn't he?

Some years back, I worked for an investment company, Morgan Stanley. And I came across many of the terms they use like stock market, bonds, IRA, CD, NASDAQ, Prime Brokerage, Investment Portfolio, and a thousand others which I didn't have any idea about. All I know is that an investment is supposed to yield a return.

The church is also in the business of investing – of course, our main investment is not in the stock market, but in people. We want to invest in you the things that will help you to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ, and we are expecting a return on that investment. Note that I did not invent these things I'm sharing with you this morning. These are just a few of the things that the early church did as well. They invested in people and that's why they grew and they grew rapidly. God expects us to emulate the example of the early church.

At this stage, you know, I'm glad we're copying the early church, but I know that, as the saying goes, there's always room for improvement.

So, today I want us to see exactly what it is that Fil-Am is investing in people and what type of return we should expect. And when I say "we" invest, I mean the church as a whole, not just the pastors, not just the directors, not just the ministry leaders – in fact, as a member of this church you are one of the ones investing in other people, while at the same time being invested in yourself.

First of all, let's talk about...

The Investment...

There are four main ways that we invest in people – we could list some others, but I believe these four cover most of the territory. I realize that we are not perfect in all of these areas, but this is what we strive for.

- **Love**

First and foremost, the church is a place where you can experience the love of God from the people of God.

We don't love you because you are such a lovable person – we don't love you because you've done something for us and we owe you – we don't love you because we want to get something from you – our motive here is noble. We love you because we have been loved by God, and we want you to share in that experience with us. The Bible says in Romans 12:10, *“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”*

This is exactly what we are trying to accomplish here – we have no desire to be fake about this or pretend to be something that we are not. We simply want to genuinely love and honor you as a fellow human being. Our love that is invested in you is an extension of the love that has been invested in us by God Himself.

Admittedly, this isn't something that is always easy, but it is something that we make a concerted effort at accomplishing. As the Bible says, *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”* Hebrews 10:24

You know why I'm stuck with this church? Because of your love. I remember I came here in 2009. I was just a visitor. I was invited by Pastor Romy one Sunday. I couldn't say “no” because I was living with him at the time. I had just taken a job in Reston and since I knew him when I was in New York I asked if I could stay with him and Tita Kaye for some time while I wait for Bel and the children to join me after a few months. The church at the time was still meeting at

Calvary Road Baptist Church not too far from here. What struck me was the kind of affection and attention that people showed me. That's why I kept coming back.

I suspect that's why you keep coming back too, right? In fact, I've spoken to some people who have stayed in the church and they've been vocal about the fact that they like the fellowship here. People are so affectionate. Love in this church is contagious, Amen? Say to the person next to you, "You are contagious."

And do you know what's the first sign of love? A smile and a firm handshake. When you do that, you're telling the person that you're interested in him or her. Rick Warren says that whether a visitor will come back to church will be determined by that person's first five minutes in church. Smiling at someone, giving a handshake to a newcomer, those two things don't even take five minutes to do.

Going back to Hebrews 10:24, it says to "consider". In other words, think of ways to go about showing love to one another – the idea is that we as a church are to actually plan and discover ways of loving each other better. Early in 2010, the directors thought of one way to show love. That gave birth to our fellowship meal after the service. Since that time we've been doing that until the pandemic came. But now, we're trying to bring it back slowly but surely. We have this fellowship meal every last Sunday of the month. And we've been a little creative too because now we celebrate those celebrating their birthdays. We want to make everyone feel special.

As we know Filipinos love food and lechon. They are two different things, do you know that? So, we said, let's serve food after service and let's serve lechon on special occasions. We have to be grateful to Kuya Rey for teaching us about the difference. Anyway, we believe that the best way to a person's heart is through his or her stomach, to paraphrase a common saying.

Love is the first investment. Next is

- **Time**

Maybe you heard about the guy that wanted to go to a Time Management seminar once, but he couldn't fit it into his schedule. The truth of the matter is we need to value the time that we have. We need to make sure that we are making good use of it, as we really don't know how much time we have left.

And when I say we need to make good use of it, sometimes that good use is relaxing, spending time with your family, or going on vacation. But as I've said in the past, it is very important that we are each involved in the work of the local church and that takes time.

Many, many people here at Fil-Am are investing their time in your life through this church because they care about you. Why do they do that? Why do our Sunday School teachers spend hours preparing their lessons for our children each week? Why does RJ spend untold hours studying for IMPACT Class and sharing them with you every hour every Sunday? Why does our Worship Team spend so much time rehearsing after service and before the service? And when our men lead worship, why do they spend double the time it takes to practice? Why do our volunteers in many different areas spend so much time doing what they do? Why does our prayer team gather every Wednesday to spend time praying for you? Why does Arnel spend time making sure that our guests feel welcome? Why do our audio/visual guys spend time working on our slides and operating our sound system every Sunday service? Why do Faye and Bel spend so much time encouraging you and emailing you to bring food for our last Sunday celebration of our birthday celebrants and making sure the celebrants feel special and ensuring that everyone gets beautiful pictures that's worthy of Facebook?

Is it because these people have nothing else to do? Is it because they have no other demands on their time? No, they do what they do because they care about

you and they believe that the time they invest in their various ministries is time well-spent because it will have a positive impact for the Kingdom of God.

Now, you might spend your time in one area, and I spend mine in another. You may spend more time than I do and vice versa but it doesn't matter. In God's economy, one hour of cooking is equivalent to 30 minutes of preaching. Both will feed you. Amen?

So, first there is love. Then, there is time. Now, we have

- **Guidance**

At a 1999 conference in Houston, speaker Marti Ensign, a missionary to Africa, told of bringing some African pastors to the U.S. for a big meeting. During their free time, these Africans wanted to go shopping. Even though they were in a small town, Marti knew there was a chance someone might have difficulty or get lost. So she gave them her phone number for such an emergency.

In less than an hour the phone rang and one African said, "I am lost." Marti said, "Lay the phone down, go to the street corner, find out the names of the two streets at the corner, come back and tell me, and I will come and get you."

In a few minutes he returned to the phone and reported, "I am at the corner of 'Walk' and 'Don't Walk.'"

Sometimes in life we feel like we're in the same corner. We're lost and we don't know which way to go. We as a church are here to help guide you toward making the right decisions that will impact your life in a positive way. We do that through teaching, through preaching, through fellowship, through personal counsel, and many other ways. We invest what God has taught us into your life so that you can invest it into other people's lives.

Paul says in Colossians, *"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ."* (Colossians 1:28)

That is exactly how we, as a church, invest ourselves in the lives of others. Warning and teaching with the wisdom that God has given to us.

Is it for our personal benefit? No – it is so everyone we are in contact with can be presented to God perfect in their relationship to Christ.

The final investment we do is

- **Support**

The Bible says in 2 Cor. 1:4, “...who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

What troubles does God comfort us in? All of them! Why does He comfort us in our troubles? So that we can comfort others! We want to invest in you by giving you the support you need when trials and tribulations come into your life. We have a team of prayer warriors that are ready to pray for you as soon as they know about your need. Do you have a prayer request? Just fill out that little piece of paper you find inside your bulletins.

We have people that are more than willing to talk with you, comfort you, pray with you, encourage you, or do whatever else is necessary. We want to invest in you by supporting you in the best way that we know how.

Folks, these are four ways that we invest in each other’s lives here at Fil-Am. These are ways that you invest in my life and I invest in your life.

We are not making this investment to gain anything personally, but at the same time we realize that when an investment is made, there is going to be some kind of return. Biblically speaking, when we invest in the way I’ve described, something good is going to happen in your life and is also going to happen to the church as a whole.

So, let’s talk now about

The Return...

Just like I gave you four ways that we invest in people's lives, I want to give you these four returns, or expectations that we have for each and every one of us. In other words, when you've been loved, and had people giving their time to you, and had them guide and support you, these four qualities will be part of your life.

- **Unity**

Let me share with you this story. The monks at a remote monastery deep in the woods followed a rigid vow of silence. Their vow could only be broken once a year—on Christmas—by one monk. That monk could speak only one sentence.

One Christmas, Brother Rey had his turn to speak and said, "I love the delightful mashed potatoes we have every year with the Christmas lechon!" Then he sat down. Silence ensued for 364 days.

Then, on the 365th day, the next Christmas, Brother Elvin got his turn and said, "I think the mashed potatoes are lumpy, and I truly despise them!" Once again, silence ensued for 364 days.

The following Christmas, Brother David rose and said, "I am fed up with this constant bickering!"

Some people just can't get along, can they?

When I tell other ministers about all that we are doing here, and at the same time tell them that this congregation is united they find that hard to believe. They are so used to hearing about fights and splits and bickering that they have trouble comprehending how we can be moving forward, making changes, and demonstrating Christian unity at the same time.

As far as I know we don't have any cliques here. Although we have two home groups we help each other out when that becomes necessary. That's why see some members of the home groups cross borders. There's no jealousy, no envy, no intrigues. Everyone is welcome except for Maritess and Marisol, Amen? We are one big clique, one family. Amen again?

Jesus says in his prayer, “...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:21)

I’m not surprised by the unity here – because I know that if we are investing in people the way I’ve described, this is going to be the natural result. This is a return on our investment that we cannot do without.

Another return of investment is

- **Devotion**

The book of Acts gives us the history of the early church. Acts 2 gives us an account of the very first church gathered together in worship. The Bible says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)

These early Christians were devoted to four basic things: Apostle’s teaching, Fellowship, Lord’s Supper, and Prayer. Why were they devoted to these things? Because they had been experiencing what it meant to be invested in by God and by each other.

That investment led them to pour out their hearts to God and to fellow believers. When people are being invested in, they will begin to have a deeper level of commitment to both the God we worship and to their fellow members in the church.

Then, there’s also a return called

- **Growth**

Unlike the stock market, when you are investing in people, you’re going to see them going up, and not down. They are going to grow to heights beyond your expectation. Sometimes the people we invest in will grow beyond us in their spiritual journey. When we invest in each other spiritual growth is a sure result.

The Bible says in Romans 1, *“I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.”* (Romans 1:11-12)

Again, we see that mutual investment results in mutual growth. I impart a spiritual blessing to you and you grow in the Lord – you impart a spiritual blessing to me and I grow in the Lord.

Our purpose in this is to help each other grow in our relationship to Christ.

Finally, we have a return called

- **Fulfillment**

Here is the last return on our investment – when we are ministered to by the church we begin to live a life of satisfaction. We know that we are in the right place, doing what God has called us to do, ministering to others, and being ministered to ourselves. We have found what it is we were looking for.

I hope you’re finding your spiritual fulfillment here in this church. Because spiritual fulfillment will spread to other areas of your life. By being fulfilled, you’ll find satisfaction in your relationships, in your marriage, in your careers, in your ministry, what-have-you.

But friend, you know why you are able to or you can find fulfillment in the church? It is because church was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ who is the foundation of this church. The Bible says that the church is his Bride and Jesus loves his Bride more than anything else in the whole universe. He loves her so much that he died for her.

If you’re new here or you never realized this, the only way to find real fulfillment in life is to be a member of the church of Christ. To become a member, you believe with all your heart that Jesus died for you, he was buried, and he resurrected. All of us are sinners, the Bible says, and we have to admit we are sinners. We’re all walking away from God. But the Bible says God loves us so

much he was the one who paved the way for us to be saved. John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*”

If you want to be saved, if you want fulfillment in this life and beyond, believe in the Lord Jesus, in what he has done for you. It’s not what you have done, not about your good works, your religion, how good you’ve been or the rites and rituals you observe. It’s about having a personal relationship with Jesus. Accepting him as your personal Lord and Savior.

The Bible says, “*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*” (John 1:12)

Then, when you become a child of God, you can start investing in other people’s lives. You can give them the values that matter most to us, your love, your time, your guidance, and your support.

Are you willing to make that investment by first accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior?