

FOR THIS WE STAND

VALUES UNDERLYING THE
MOUNT VERNON NAZARENE UNIVERSITY
AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OF FAITH,
SHAPING CHRIST-LIKE LEADERS FOR LIFELONG SERVICE
E. LeBron Fairbanks, President

INTRODUCTION

If you are a parent or a student seriously interested in Mount Vernon Nazarene University, the following document will matter to you.

Its purpose is to give you an overview of the basic values that characterize our campus community. The fact is, nearly every college in our nation was originally founded on Christian principles. And while many still speak of these principles in their mission statements, few actually practice them.

At Mount Vernon Nazarene University, we have not only remained committed to our founding precepts, but we also continue to apply them to everyday living. Consequently, the values outlined in the following pages are not merely statements on paper; they literally drive all aspects of university life.

Presented in the form of affirmations, they are drawn from a lengthier commentary I prepared, which was published in 1994. These affirmations reflect my conviction that the biblical mandate for the holy life, to which God calls all believers, is summarized in the scriptural commands to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength and thy neighbor as thyself" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:30-31).

In times like these, when Judeo-Christian values are no longer the moral centerpiece of our culture, we believe the need for a college that practices these standards is greater than ever. If you believe that too, we invite you to become involved with our campus community.

AFFIRMATION NUMBER 2**WE LOVE GOD**

THEREFORE, WE SEEK TO EXPRESS THESE FOUNDATIONAL VALUES:

1. A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

We acknowledge that worship is the Christian's primary privilege and duty, and we consider both private and corporate worship an essential ingredient of a faith community. At MVNU, praise to the Lord is frequently expressed during chapel services, in private devotional moments, and in small group gatherings.

2. A BIBLICAL FAITH

Our faith is grounded in the Christ of scripture, the living Word of God. We embrace the entire Bible, believing it to be the written revelation of our Heavenly Father. Because it is a vital tool in learning how to walk with Him daily and to anticipate life with Him eternally, all MVNU students take courses which are designed to give them a deeper understanding of the Bible.

3. A CHRISTLIKE LIFESTYLE

A biblical faith results in Christian action; therefore, we are committed to a Christlike lifestyle in our campus community. Jesus summed up the way He intends us to live when He said, "...seek first His (God's) kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Our attitudes regarding the sacredness of life (even of the unborn), the stewardship of our possessions, the perils of homosexuality, and the beauty of sex within marriage are shaped by His teaching.

4. A HOLINESS ETHIC

Committed Christians do not live as the world lives – the integration of faith and life becomes increasingly more important as we mature in Him – and decisions flow from biblical convictions. Words are spoken and actions taken because of who we are as devoted followers of Jesus. At the same time, certain actions are not taken because of what we stand for, because of scriptural commands and prohibitions, because we want to please God. At MVNU, as followers of Jesus, we observe a holiness ethic and we act accordingly. We oppose the use of alcohol and tobacco, trafficking and consumption of illegal drugs, pornography, and the low level of moral values exalted in television and movies.

5. A GLOBAL MISSION

We believe the whole world is the arena of God's love and concern – that everyone is in need of the gospel of His forgiveness and grace. When we experience people of other cultures – individuals who differ from us in color, race, and language – we affirm that God loves them as He does us. We increasingly broaden our vision of God's love and concern beyond our own city, state, region, and country. As Christian musician Steve Green reminds us:

*To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission,
The spring from which our service overflows,
Across the street or around the world, the mission's still the same,
Proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' name. **

As committed Christians, this mission gives focus to our activities, behavior, thoughts, and actions. We have an evangelistic zeal that drives us with passion to tell others of the saving grace of Jesus. **Written by John Mohr and Randal IDennis*

6. A CREATION VISION

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." These words in Psalm 24:1 challenge and command us to take care of His creation. In recent years, we have become increasingly more concerned about conservation and protection. And while environmental protection may remind us of government bureaucracy, we believe it should be a personal issue for Christians. At MVNU, we take steps geared toward becoming better stewards of God's earthly resources.

7. A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DEVOTION

Believing that time alone with God each day is vital for the Christian, we encourage every member of our campus community to follow this practice. Prayer, scripture, devotional readings, reflection, solitude

– all these are valuable elements of each Christian's devotional life and essential for a growing relationship with Him. God's Spirit within us prompts and enables us to quiet our hearts and to find time daily to spend with Him.

AFFIRMATION NUMBER 2

WE RESPECT OTHERS

THEREFORE, WE STRIVE TO PRACTICE THESE BEHAVIORS:

1. A MAGNANIMOUS SPIRIT

As committed Christians, we seek to be big-spirited, to give others the benefit of the doubt, and to look for the good in everyone. Our ideal is to rejoice with those who rejoice, to resist putting people down to build ourselves up, and to forgive others even before it is asked. Jesus set the ultimate example in forgiveness when He said, *"Father, forgive them, they, know, not what they do."*

2. A SERVANT MENTALITY

The MVNU motto, *"To seek to learn is to seek to serve,"* is meant in the broadest sense – not only in terms of pastoral ministry or missions. We see it as day-to-day service to others in the name of Jesus. It means we take time to listen to one who is troubled, to hold the hand of one who is afraid, to comfort one who is hurt. We believe that all Christians – whatever their vocational choice – are called to ministry.

3. A TRUSTWORTHY CHARACTER

As Christians, our word becomes our bond. Our lives assume an authentic, transparent, and genuine nature. In whatever we do, our character must be trustworthy. In the academic arena, for example, our code of integrity requires honesty in exams and assignments. Moreover, we seek to be honest with our emotions – and to avoid harboring negative emotions that tend to divide and separate the fellowship of Christians.

4. A POSITIVE INFLUENCE

Christians are called to build others up, to encourage, and to care. As a result, we can make a positive difference in the lives of those around us and in the situations in which we find ourselves. *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is beneficial to others, that it may benefit those who listen."* Ephesians 4:29 is an effective and succinct statement of this important rule of conduct.

5. A COURTEOUS RESPONSE

Ephesians 4:23 reminds us that, as committed Christians, we are being continually renewed in the attitude of our minds. Therefore, we increasingly demonstrate love, acceptance, respect, and service. Attitudes like these enable us to respond courteously to others even when they do not demonstrate the same attitudes and behavior toward us.

6. A GIVING MOTIVATION

When we think of giving, we most often think of money. And while it is a key form of giving, money is certainly not the only form. Another valuable commodity we can give is our time. MVNU students illustrate this principle in many ways both on and off campus. On campus, in particular, they practice it when they take time to talk with other students and get acquainted with them – when they go out of their way to make new students feel comfortable and to assist their adjustment to college life.

7. A GRATEFUL ATTITUDE

As holiness people, we are grateful people – grateful to God, through His grace, for saving, sanctifying, and establishing us firmly in the way of holiness. Thankfulness is the continuous response of the committed Christian to the goodness of God. At the same time, our gratitude should extend to those who help us through life's journey. At MVNU, we appreciate everyone in our campus community – students, teachers, and administrators. We're thankful for each one's unique contribution to our fellowship.

AFFIRMATION NUMBER 3**WE BELIEVE IN PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY
THEREFORE, WE SET THESE EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS:****1. AN INQUISITIVE MIND**

MVNU is a faith community of learners. We believe God is the source of all truth, and we promote open dialogue about God, humankind, life, death, and eternity. Rigorous academic programs encourage scholarship, critical reflection, and problem-solving. Students are challenged to read good books, journals, and magazines. At the same time, in the example of John Wesley, they are encouraged to be a “man (or woman) of one book – the *Bible*.”

2. A DISCIPLINED SCHEDULE

For many students, being away at college for the first time presents new challenges in time management. At MVNU, we provide support and guidance designed to help students maintain a disciplined schedule. Overall, students balance their time wisely between academics and outside activities.

3. A MODEST APPEARANCE

Modesty, neatness, and cleanliness form a three-legged stool which provides a perspective for the lifestyle guidelines at MVNU. Most Christians agree on the principle of modesty, but few agree on the details. And that makes it difficult for a college to establish a standard acceptable to all. Generally speaking, we expect our students to exhibit a presence that is qualitatively different from students at colleges where faith in Jesus Christ is not the cornerstone. We believe an individual's appearance, including his/her clothes, should be appealing, not seductive; attractive, not revealing; appropriate, not offensive or extreme.

4. A BALANCED DIET

Believing that a Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we advise students to eat a balanced diet. The key word is balanced. And since each person is different, a balanced diet for one is not the same for all. An MVNU course, “*Physical Education for Life*,” includes valuable information about health and nutrition. Also focused on helping students maintain good health are the campus nurse and food service personnel.

5. A PHYSICAL FITNESS COMMITMENT

Physical exercise is essential for good health. So at MVNU we offer a variety of appropriate resources – from intramural sports to aerobics classes, from indoor athletic facilities to outdoor jogging/walking trails. There are areas for biking and also for roller-blading nearby. Another vital key to physical fitness is sufficient rest. To promote it, residential facilities are set up with regulations and guidelines that allow for quiet time and a sound night's sleep.

6. A RELIABLE WORD

We believe a person's word, integrity, and credibility are ultimately far greater treasures than popularity, fame, or fortune. These assets can, and do, pass away. But an individual's word remains. At MVNU, we provide an environment that values honesty, trustworthiness, and truthfulness. Through our actions, we exemplify our belief that individual integrity and credibility should be protected with a passion.

7. A LIFELONG LEARNING AND GROWTH PERSPECTIVE

We are committed to instilling within each student a desire for lifelong learning and growth. During the college years, we cannot possibly impact all the knowledge necessary for a lifetime. But we can teach students to learn how to learn – to understand the questions to ask – and to identify a significant direction for the future. Our goal is to help each student build a framework, spiritually and intellectually, upon which to build in the years ahead.

CONCLUSION

A **LIFE LIVED BY GRACE ALONE. DO WE LIVE EVERY DAY BY THE VALUES WE AFFIRM?** *We try. As Spirit-filled Christians, these values serve as a guide - they characterize us at our best, convict us at our worst. We acknowledge that the life of holiness is both crisis and process; a commitment to establish Jesus as Lord of our lives, and a desire to continually grow and mature in the Christian faith and in our walk with the Lord.*

It is by God's grace alone - though undeserved - that we are enabled and empowered through faith in Jesus Christ to live the life to which we have been called. Not by our own efforts; it is a gift of God. As scripture records: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

At Mount Vernon Nazarene University, this is our highest goal: that students be strengthened in these values through their experiences here. We believe the greatest compliment we can receive is for a graduate to say: "I am much stronger in mind, body, and spirit than when I began my journey at MVNU."

IF YOU CHOOSE TO BECOME PART OF THIS ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS, WE PRAY THE SAME WILL BE TRUE FOR YOU.