

PWPA President Speaks at the International Conference on the Family

Frank Kaufmann
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On November 19, 2022, PWPA President, Dr. Frank Kaufmann, spoke at Universal Peace Federation and Professors World Peace Academy's International Conference on the Family. Dr. Kaufmann gave a brief presentation on "Tradition, Youth, and New Family Values" at the Peace Embassy in Tirana, Albania.



For those wish to watch the video, please watch here:

View the presentation here:

[Conference on the Family – Tradition, Youth, and New Family Values](#)

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you.

I wish to thank Dr. Otsuka, Jacques Marion, and Dr. Selover for my invite here. I am humbled and honored to be with all of you. I am moved by your willingness to dedicate a day to an important topic with such seriousness.

My assigned topic is to address transmitting values from one generation to the next, to “the youth.” My content may move in somewhat of a controversial direction, so, I ask your patience. My intention with this presentation arises from my view that when we seek to do something for the sake of good, we should do it rigorously and well. We should seek the point at which our conversations have genuine impact and are not careless in any way.

If we speak about transmitting values to young people, or of family values, we first ask, “What are values?”

There is no common agreement on what values are. A commonly used definition of values is: Values are beliefs that motivate people to act in one way or another. Values serve as a guide to human behavior.

Here are some randomly selected values.

Authenticity	Justice
Balance	Loyalty
Compassion	Peace
Creativity	Responsibility
Friendship	Security
Growth	Spirituality
Honesty	Wealth
Humor	Wisdom

I am sure you recognize some. Some might be your own values. Some might guide your behavior.

The next thing I ask is: Does holding lofty values guarantee that these will make you a good person? The answer is quite simply, no. It does not. We know this from our own lives. I frequently fail to live up to my personal values.



There are many people who hold lofty values who do great harm, or do little or no good. So are we committed to describing and disseminating values because we are hoping to make people good, or hoping to make society good? If so, then we picked the wrong path. Values do not make people good; they merely serve as guide for behavior.

If our hope is to make people good, we need to concentrate on different matters, not the mere introduction, description, and dissemination of values; no matter how great we think they are, or no matter how wonderfully or we think we patch them together.

We can dedicate ourselves to being the cleverest people in the world. We can put together all kinds of great systems and descriptions, making our presentations ever more entertaining, attractive, and compelling. But, if our desire is to make people good, we are misdirecting ourselves. This being the case, why then do we involve ourselves in describing or advocating values at all?

There are two reasons.

1. Even though values cannot make us good, still we have no chance of being good without them. Since values guide our behavior, if we somehow do find the way to control our behavior, what we do with that control will depend on the values we hold, For this reason, it is absolutely necessary to do an excellent job of defining values. Doing this anticipates the direction in which we will try to mold our behavior. We cannot be good without a clear and good set of values.

2. The second thing is an important part of what I want to discuss today. Values do not empower our capacity for good behavior, but they make unity possible. If we all hold the same values, we can live in harmony with one another. We can pursue the same goals and act in concert. If there is unity, we can perform magnificently. Even slight differences in beliefs and commitments create impediments to the smooth functioning of a group.

Say you are in a dance troop and one member believes that a pirouette is best performed in a way that differs from the instructor or from the rest of the troupe. If there is even the slightest difference in what one is committed to, the potential of the group is harmed. Harmony creates ever more refined and elegant beauty, and the chance for success. This is why we need to discuss values closely and come to a common agreement about which ones we hold. What we seek in values is oneness, not goodness.

Goodness can not necessarily come from picking the right values, but shared values can create unity. Unity prevents conflict. Conflict obstructs the capacity for anything to improve, period. For your families to improve, for ourselves, or for our society. Anything with inner conflict is obstructed, hampered, rendered impotent.

Values therefore serve unity, and unity supports progress and development. This is the beauty of values and why careful and elegant presentations like those we have heard today are important.

The next thing I want to look at is the word or concept called 'Family Values.' Here I say that both these terms are not useful without more careful wording. They cannot create goodness. I just argued that. For seeking goodness, different things are needed like self-discipline, religious practice and other such forms of training. These are what creates the possibility to become good; practice.



But also unfortunately, the words 'family values' are not even sufficient to create unity, which is what I said is the main reason for pursuing a shared definition of values. Here is why I say this phrase is inadequate.

I created some examples of family; an Anglican family, a Traditionalist Muslim family, a Traditionalist Yoruba family (Yoruba are mostly from West Africa. They are a traditional African religion and tradition.). And, an LGBTQ "married" couple.

If we were to ask each of these types of families, 'Do you believe in family values?' Their answer would be yes.

If you were to ask a Muslim with four wives; 'Do you believe in family values?' Yes. A homosexual couple similarly will insist they uphold family values.

What are family values?

They are respect your elders, respect your spouse, care for your children, care for your siblings. Everyone will say; 'That's what we are doing.' From this we can see that constantly repeating 'we are for family values' is not sufficient to realize what we seek.

Everyone says, 'I completely support family values,' but can someone living in London, or here in Tirana

have four wives? What if I insisted that I really care for each wife? Still it is not allowed here. So we see from this that various places organize their laws on something other than purely 'family values' *per se*. This is what we need to look at closely.

Why do some Muslims believe it is sanctioned, even good for a man to have four wives? I believe this is drawn from Quranic teaching. Could a homosexual couple live in Afghanistan under the Taliban? I don't think so, I really don't think so. So, there are family structures allowed in some places that are downright rejected and forbidden in others, deemed unacceptable. The thing is though that rejecting these traditions is not based on the claim that they fail to uphold family values. It is from something else.

So, as we seek collectively to come up with the highest imaginable dream of how we can live as humans, of how our lives can be fulfilled, and what must be the best way for us. We think about what I want for my daughters and sons? As we think about this, we realize in just these few short moments that we cannot rely on terms like 'family values' and then presume that we have done what is needed to get the job done. What causes these differences in assumptions and family structures?

These different traditions are held to be sacred. Monogamy comes from the evolution of Biblical tradition. Muslim polygamy comes from Qur'anic interpretation. All family structures come something that is held to be sacred. How can we come to a world where we all agree on what's the best way to live, so we can trust one another.

If we encounter cultures different from our own, and we meet sincere people who hold views on family structures different from our own, how do we start to move towards harmony? This is the question.

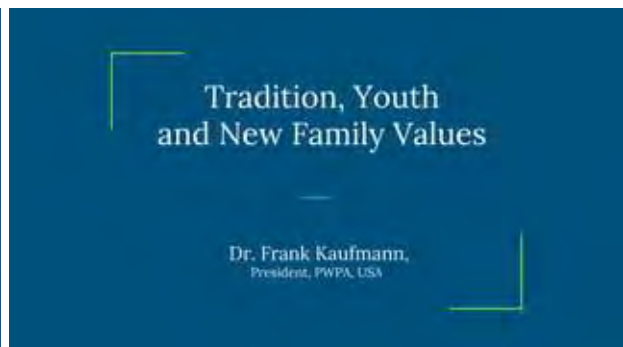
I say these differences exist in the world of 'horizontal' difference. It is geographical. One family is in Iran, one in Belgium, and another is in New York. This is 'horizontal' across cultures. In our desire to create traditions in common, we must respect people from different cultures. We must work with them and be dialogical with them. This is the only way to pursue harmony.

I argue in this presentation that the same holds true when trying to pass traditions and values on to our children. I flip the horizontal plane of cultural difference on its side to show a vertical version of this same reality. Generations in important ways are like nations. They have cultures.

My efforts to share values and create harmony with young people from the next generation have the same challenges as would face a Munich family when dealing with a rural Afghani family. When I try to communicate values to people from younger generations, I must be aware that they have cultures that are different, and even if I myself cannot see it, they believe their ways reflect lofty values. They are like a nation with a culture that is strange to me. To make any progress, I must be in dialogue. This is the way essential values can be transmitted and unity pursued.

If elders think they hold the whole truth, they have no capacity to transmit values and promote the dream of harmony. A myopic or parochial posture that our culture alone carries all truth prevents us from building respectful relationships that allow us to move closer and have our valuable knowledge and experience be received and appreciated. We lose our children just like we would lose relations horizontally with friends from different cultures.

Thank you for your time and attention, I appreciate it.



What Are Values

No commonly agreed upon definition

Widely Used Explanation:

Values are individual beliefs that motivate people to act one way or another. They serve as a **guide** for human behavior.

Authenticity
Balance
Compassion
Creativity
Friendship
Growth
Honesty
Humour

Justice
Loyalty
Peace
Responsibility
Security
Spirituality
Wealth
Wisdom

Does Holding Lofty Values Ensure a Person Will Be Good

No.

- Many people with lofty values do great harm and little or no good
- Commitment to the dissemination, expansion, and transmission of values should not be the means by which we hope to make people good
- **Efforts to make people good require different, additional means**

If Having Lofty Values Does Not Ensure Good Behavior, Why Advocate Certain Values?

1. Having lofty values creates the **possibility** of becoming **good**
 - It is not possible to become good without having good values
2. Efforts to establish, disseminate, expand, and transmit values should be tied to the pursuit of **unity**, not goodness

Shared Values Produce Unity

1. Unity prevents conflict
 2. **Unity supports progress and development**
- VALUES ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

Family Values

1. **Not sufficient to create goodness.** (No critique there. It is just like all other values. They cannot ensure behavior)
2. But it also is **not sufficient to create unity!** (Which IS the purpose of establishing and promulgating values!)

Family Values - Examples

1. Anglican
2. Traditionalist Muslim
3. Traditionalist Yoruba
4. LGBTQ married couple

Family Values - Examples

1. Anglican
 2. Traditionalist Muslim
 3. Traditionalist Yoruba
 4. LGBTQ married couple
- Will any of these groups say "I don't believe in Family Values"?

Family Values - Examples

1. Anglican
 2. Traditionalist Muslim
 3. Traditionalist Yoruba
 4. LGBTQ married couple
- Respect your elders (your parents)
Respect your spouse
Care for your children
Care for your siblings

Transmitting Values to our Children

These same difficulties I just demonstrated regarding **Family Values across cultures**, are identical in difficulty in the work to **transmit values to our children** (or the "the young generation")

Transmitting Values to our Children

Various family cultures in the world, I call "**horizontal**" dynamics

Generation to generation, I call "**vertical**" dynamics.

But the ways needed to succeed are the same

Transmitting Values to our Children

Each generation can be seen as a "culture."

Two communities (elder-younger) trying to embrace shared values is a work of identical dynamics.

We cannot go tromping with our boots through a traditionalist Muslim home. Likewise we cannot tromp with our boots through the "culture" of our children. **We should not be careless**