





CHAPTER 02

Who Do You Want To Become? The Power of Defining Your Core Values

“Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny.”

— Mahatma Gandhi¹⁷

In Chapter 1 you learned how to bring the foundations of your life into alignment with God by living the Cycle of Spiritual Guidance. Now it's time to figure out who you truly dream of becoming. When you have a clear sense of the type of person you hope to become, you can make concrete plans for getting from where you're at today to where you'd like to be in the future.

Ask yourself how you would describe the person you are right now. Now think about the ideal version of yourself, the person you'd like to be in the future. How do these two differ? What ideas and principles would you like to one day define you as a person? What will drive the way you make important life decisions? What about the way you choose to live your daily life? If you're totally honest with yourself there will always be a gap between where you're at right now and where you hope to be in the future. This isn't something you should feel bad about or that you should stress out about. In fact, that's actually the way it's supposed to be. Figuring out how to bridge that gap is a huge part of what life is all about. The answers to these questions play a key role in determining the kind of person you are today as well as who you will become tomorrow. To ensure that you put yourself on the path toward becoming your best possible self—the person God knows you can become—it's absolutely essential that you take time to clearly define your Core Values.

Core Values are a concrete set of beliefs, principles, and ideals that guide the way a person chooses to live their life, and that motivates them to become a better person. Your Core Values will help you make difficult life decisions, and will also give you a clear set of criteria with which you can hold yourself accountable and gauge how well you're progressing toward your most important goals. This chapter will teach you how to identify and define your own highly personalized set of Core Values.

A Step-By-Step Guide For Establishing Your Core Values

Before you begin defining your Core Values, it's important to understand that this is a time intensive process. Figuring out the set of Core Values that will guide your life and define who you are is an important project, and it will require time and sincere effort. As you follow the steps outlined below, be sure to listen for the Holy Spirit since, as we discussed in Chapter 1, this is the way God will give you guidance.

Defining your Core Values is also a *dynamic* process. You should plan on

returning to these values over and over again throughout your life, especially as you grow and develop. Doing so will ensure that you're always working toward a clearly defined goal of who you're striving to become.

Step 1: Find Holy Ground

When God called Moses up into the mountains to speak with him, He told the ancient prophet: “Do not come any closer. . . Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.”¹⁸ We all need to find our own personal “holy ground,” a physical place where we can go to seek inspiration and God’s guidance. For Moses it was Mount Sinai. For you it might be a church, the desert, the beach, your bedroom, sitting in your car at a favorite overlook, or any other place. Wherever it is, it needs to be a place where you feel comfortable thinking, pondering, and praying.

Step 2: Ponder

Once you’ve found your holy ground, use it to ponder the type of person you currently are. Next, think deeply and seriously about the type of person you want to become in the future—picture your ideal self. What sorts of things does that person do? How do they interact with others? What sorts of principles do they live by? What do you like about that person? In what ways is that person different from the person you are right now?

To reiterate, it’s important to be honest with yourself. Don’t be afraid to confront your weaknesses or to look squarely at the things you might want to change about yourself. Learning to be honest with yourself, especially about the hard things, is a powerful tool that will enable you to grow and transform in incredible ways. If you are honest with yourself in this step, there will always be a gap between the person you are right now and the person you want to become in the future. And that’s OK. In fact, recognizing this gap will help you identify what it is you truly value, what your deepest desires are, where your greatest hopes lie, and what you need to do to make them a reality.

Step 3: Write Core Value Statements

With the image of your ideal self firmly in mind, it’s time to start making your thoughts into something more concrete. You do this by writing Core Value Statements. Begin by writing down a specific key attribute of the ideal self you’re envisioning. One of the attributes I identify when I think about the person I want to become is “charitable.” Whatever attribute you’ve identified

when you think about your ideal self, write it down. This is now a Core Value.

Now, define what this attribute means to you. I described what the attribute of being charitable means to me this way: “The pure love of God is the more excellent way.”

Once you’ve done that, expand your definition into an active statement that articulates precisely how the attribute will become a part of your actual behaviors. Be as specific and concrete as possible.

Finally, end the statement with a positive affirmation, almost as if you’d already achieved the attribute you’re writing about. This is an important step because it helps plant positive thoughts into your subconscious mind, and we really do become the things we spend the most time thinking about.

Combining all these steps, here’s what my Core Value Statement for being charitable looks like:

*“**Charitable:** The pure love of God is the more excellent way. **[Definition]** I will become more like Him as I give freely and unconditionally to those in need. As long as I have, I will give. **[Active statement]** I am charitable. **[Positive affirmation]**”*

Another example of one of my Core Values is striving to be a continuous learner. Here’s what my statement for this value looks like:

*“**Continuous Learner:** I strive to be ever learning in both spiritual and secular studies. I believe in the ‘daily bread’ principle, which reminds me that I must feed myself with knowledge every single day. **[Definition]** I will fill my mind with teachings out of the great books. I will not waste my time in studies that do not add value to my life. **[Active statement]** I am a continuous learner and a pursuer of excellence. **[Positive affirmation]**”*

I’ve developed both of these Core Value Statements over the course of many years. As I grow, learn, and develop, I return to them over and over again to update and revise them. Sometimes I remove a phrase or sentence. Sometimes I change the language to more accurately reflect something I’ve learned. Sometimes I add new sentences that help clarify my vision.

The key is to write down statements like these for every attribute you see when you envision your ideal self. These attributes are your Core Values, the things that will allow you to close the gap between where you're at today and where you want to be tomorrow. As with everything else in this process, take your time and don't rush it. Once you've written Core Value Statements for each of the attributes you identify in your ideal self, use them to gauge how well you're doing and to help you figure out what specific things you need to focus on in your quest to become your best possible self.

Step 4: Rank Your Core Values

As you start building your collection of Core Value Statements, take time to ponder each one. Try to rank them in order of importance. There may be some Core Values that don't fit well into any sort of ranking, but trying to establish some sort of ordered list can help you figure out where to focus your attention and efforts first so you don't feel overwhelmed trying to accomplish them all at a once.

For example, if you put being charitable at the top of your list of Core Values, then you know that's what you should focus on the most. This isn't to say that the other Core Values don't matter as much, or that you shouldn't try to develop them alongside the higher-ranking ones. This list is simply a tool to make the task of self-transformation a bit more concrete and actionable. It helps give you a solid starting place.

Step 5: Do Your Core Values Align With God?

As Chapter 1 pointed out, the key to life success is to align yourself with God. This is especially true when it comes to developing your Core Values. After you've created a ranked list of all your Core Value Statements, return to your holy ground and ask God if what you've come up with matches what He wants for your life. Pay attention to your inner voice and look for the presence of the Holy Spirit to confirm that what you've done is good. The goal is to create a list of Core Values that God would smile upon.

Another powerful way to align your Core Values with God is to pair each of your Core Value Statements with a passage from the Bible. This will not only give you the confidence to know that you're building a life grounded in God's word, but will also help you see how your Core Value is reflected in scripture, how it's defined by scripture, and how it works in relation to other Biblical teachings.

So for example, I might match my Core Value of becoming charitable with 1 Timothy 1:5, where the Apostle Paul writes: “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”¹⁹ This verse adds new insight to my understanding of being charitable, and can help inspire me in my attempt to make this a key part of my life.

Developing your own personalized set of Core Values that you know are in alignment with God is a powerful step in beginning the process of self-transformation. Return to your Core Value Statements throughout your life and let them guide how you make decisions, what you prioritize in your day-to-day life, and the type of person you’re striving to become.

Application and Relevance

1. Remember that the whole point of defining your Core Values is to actually LIVE the values you describe. This is what will enable you to BECOME the person you would one day like to be.
2. Tap into the power of finding your own holy ground—this is your personal sacred space in which to pray, ponder, and meditate.
3. Use your Core Values to help you continually move forward in life. Even when you stumble, if you keep your sights fixed on progressing you will begin building a life of peace and purpose.
4. Understand that the process of becoming cannot be achieved alone; be sure your Core Values are in alignment with God.
5. Keep in mind that this is all part of a life-long process of TRANSFORMATION. Even though you won't yet be your best possible self, find joy in the process of change. This will help you LOVE the person you've already become as well as the person you're still in the process of becoming.
6. Follow the step-by-step guide for developing your Core Values:
 - a. Find holy ground
 - b. Ponder
 - c. Write Core Value Statements
 - d. Rank your Core Values
 - e. Do your Core Values align with God?

[illegible]

[illegible]