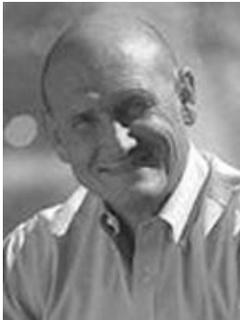


Your Governing Values Are the Foundation of Personal Fulfillment

by Hyrum W. Smith



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hen Benjamin Franklin was twenty-two years old—he was living in Philadelphia at the time, having run away from an oppressive apprenticeship in his native Boston—he conceived the “bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection.” In essence, he asked himself the question: “What are the highest priorities in my life?” From this period of introspection, he emerged with twelve “virtues”—his governing values. So there would be no question in his mind what those values meant to him, he qualified every one of them with a written statement. The result of this exercise is shown below:

Temperance	“Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.”
Silence	“Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.”
Order	“Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.”
Resolution	“Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.”
Frugality	“Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; that is waste nothing.”
Industry	“Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.”
Sincerity	“Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.”

Justice	“Wrong none by doing injuries; or omitting the benefits that are your duty.”
Moderation	“Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.”
Cleanliness	“Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.”
Tranquility	“Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.”
Chastity	“Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation.”

Franklin took these twelve statements to a Quaker friend of his and asked his opinion of them. The Quaker friend looked at them and informed Franklin that he’d forgotten one: humility. He “kindly inform’d me,” said Ben, “that I was generally thought proud; that my Pride show’d itself frequently in Conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any Point, but was overbearing & rather insolent; of which he convinced me by mentioning several Instances.” So Franklin added a thirteenth virtue—*Humility*. He wrote a four-word statement describing what it meant to him: “Imitate Jesus and Socrates.” He then organized his life into thirteen weekly cycles, and for one week out of thirteen he would mentally focus on one of those virtues in an effort to bring his performance in line with his values.

At age seventy-eight he wrote in his memoirs, “On the whole, tho’ I never arrived at the Perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was by the Endeavor a better and happier Man than I otherwise should have been, if I had not attempted it.” The only qualifier he added to this assessment regarded humility (which, you remember, was not one of his original twelve virtues). Of humility he wrote with typical Franklin candor, “I cannot boast of much Success in the *Reality* of this virtue; but I had a good deal with regard to the *Appearance* of it.”

Ben Franklin first identified his governing values, then he made a concerted effort to live his life, day in, day out, according to those values. That is the exact process we will be discussing for the next several chapters. The *first* step is, of course, to identify your governing values.

Each of us lives his or her life according to a unique set of *governing values*. Lying at the core of who you are as a person, these governing values are things that are most important to you—for whatever reason. Because they include those traits and beliefs—like honesty and love and belief in a higher power—that are the fundamental building blocks of your personality, you may not be able to explain their importance; they’re just important to you. Other governing values, like the desire for financial security or the need to make a difference, represent mega-goals that we feel driven to accomplish in life. Whatever your particular governing values may be, they are represented by the clearest answers you can give to these questions: *What are the highest priorities in my life?* and *Of these priorities which do I value most?*

Even though our governing values are our highest priorities, there often exists a gap between these ideals and our present reality. Our performance relating to those values is never perfect, but as our performance improves, something wonderful happens. We experience the inner peace we’ve talked about. Abraham Maslow referred to this unity between our values and our everyday performance as “self-actualization.” *It is a bringing together of what I do and what I really value.*

Crossing the I Beam

I'm not going to try to sell you on a set of values. That would be both inappropriate and unnecessary. You've already got your values. But having them and identifying them are two different matters. Examining your life and facing up to your actual values may be one of the most difficult (though rewarding) experiences of your life. In fact, this is such a critical activity that I usually suggest to people that they spend five to seven hours analyzing their values and goals.

To get you started on this demanding process, let me walk you through a scenario, originally developed by James W. Newman, author of *Release Your Brakes!*, that will help you reach inside and discover what these values are.

Imagine that I've come to visit you at your home, and I've brought with me an I beam that's about 120 feet long. In case you don't know what an I beam is, it's a steel beam that's used in construction. A cross section of it looks like a capital "I." Turn it on its side and it becomes an H beam. Let's suppose I've got this I beam lying in the street in front of your home. All your neighbors have come outside to gawk at it and wonder what kind of strange people you've started making friends with. But you don't care, because this I beam means money for you. You can put up with a few stares. You don't care what people think, right?

Now, imagine that I'm standing at one end of the I beam, and I ask you to take your place at the other end, 120 feet away from me. You walk to the other end, and when you get there, I reach into my wallet and retrieve a hundred-dollar bill. I have to shout a little bit—120 feet's a long way—but I shout, "Hey, you down there at the other end of the beam. If you'll walk across this I beam without stepping off either side and get here in two minutes, I'll give you one hundred dollars." Would you come? Well, that's up to you to answer, but I can tell you that in all the seminars I've done, I've only had one person turn me down. I'll tell you about him in a minute.

Now, I'm going to change the scenario a little bit. I'm going to take this I beam and put it on the back of a long flatbed truck, and we're going to drive this truck to New York City. Down in lower Manhattan are two buildings called the World Trade Center—the highest twin towers in the world, 1,360 feet above the pavement. I have mounted on one of those buildings a crane that will let a cable down, pick the I beam up off the truck, lift it between the two buildings, and set it on the edge of each building. The beam is just long enough to allow about twelve inches extra on each side. Now just to make sure it doesn't fall, I'm going to bolt the I beam to a little bracket on each building. Because of the expanse between these two buildings, that I beam is bowed just a little, almost imperceptibly. I beams aren't supposed to bow, but this one bows just a little, and it's raining. It's not raining very hard; it's kind of a thick mist.

Now, if you've been to the top of the World Trade Center, you know that there's always a wind up there. But there's also a wonderful view. Let's imagine that you're on one building, I'm on the other, the wind's blowing about forty miles per hour, and I shout through the mist and the wind and say, "Listen, if you'll walk—not crawl—across this I beam and get here in two minutes, I'll give you one hundred dollars." Would you come now? If you would, you'd be the first person I've ever met who would come across the I beam for one hundred dollars. In fact, I've yet to find someone who will come across for one thousand or ten thousand or one hundred thousand dollars. At \$1 million (tax-free, of course) some hesitate before turning me down. Now, why won't people cross the I beam for all that money? For the simple reason that they value life more than they value money.

Now, let's change the scenario again. I'm not a nice guy anymore. You have a two-year-old daughter, but I've kidnapped her and I'm holding her by the hair over the edge on my side, and I say, "Listen, if you don't get across that I beam right now, I'll drop your daughter." Would you come now?

As I use this imaginary scenario in my seminars, it's incredible to see people's faces when I hold the two-year-old over the edge. Suddenly they understand what I'm driving at. When the scenario becomes very personal, the concept of personal values becomes incredibly clear, and we realize that there are very few things for which we would cross the I beam. We understand, perhaps for the first time, just how much we value our own life. But we also realize that there are a few things that are more important to us than our own life. A two-year-old daughter or son is one of them. That is a governing value. "I love my child" is the most powerful value for many people. And when we understand that, the implications of that statement start to strike home. Money has value, safety has value, but love of a child has far greater value. And love of a child goes far beyond walking across an I beam to save his or her life. It means more than risking your life for that child—it means living your life for that child.

Once at a seminar in San Diego, I made the mistake of choosing a woman who had a teenager participate in this role play. I learned an interesting lesson that day. People will not necessarily come across for teenagers. I had the kid over the edge. I told her to come across. She said, "Drop him." It ruined my entire presentation.

The effects of this exercise are sometimes electrifying. Several years ago I was teaching this concept to a group of about sixty-five. When I got to the point of identifying our governing values, I asked someone to help, as I always do. And since that experience in San Diego, I always ask for someone who has a two-year-old. On this particular day a woman raised her hand. I took her through the whole I beam scenario, I had her on the top of the World Trade Center, and I said, "Would you come across for one hundred dollars?"

"No," she answered.

"Would you come across for ten thousand dollars?"

"No."

"Would you come across for fifty thousand dollars?"

"No."

"One million?"

"No."

Then I said, as I always do, "I have your two-year old child hanging over the edge on my side. If you don't get across that I beam right now, I'm going to drop your child."

Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the response from the person I have selected is instantaneous—"Of course I'd come across." And the minute they say that, I have made my point. I have identified one of their governing values. On this occasion, however, when this woman was confronted with the death of her two-year-old, she didn't respond immediately. She sat there stunned, unable to speak. You can imagine what happened in the room. Everyone began to be very uncomfortable. They all wanted to respond for her, "Of course, go across the I beam. Save the child." But finally, after a long silence, this woman looked at me, very distraught, and said, "No, I don't think I would come across." The whole group was stunned.

She felt she should offer a reason for her unexpected response, so she said, “You need to understand, I have eleven other children. If I were to give my life for my two-year-old, who would take care of my eleven other children?” That took some of the tension out of the room. Many people—I could see it in their eyes—thought that was okay. Maybe.

I was able to salvage my point that day, and we proceeded with the seminar, but I could tell that this woman was devastated by what had just happened. She wept silently for most of the seminar, and didn’t hear a thing I said for the rest of the day. It was a very uncomfortable experience for both of us. At the end of the seminar, she approached me with her husband, who was attending with her. She said, “I need to share something with you that I have had to face here for the first time. You need to know, Hyrum, that the two-year-old child you were going to drop over the edge is a Down’s syndrome baby. You made me face the fact that I don’t love that child as much as I love my other children. That has devastated me.” She continued, “I think I would have come across immediately for any of my other children. I have had a very difficult time loving this baby who has severe mental problems.”

This woman had been driven to the very core of her life. Her values had been laid bare to her eyes, and she didn’t like what she found. This is an important point, because having your values exposed like that causes you to evaluate them, reconsider them, perhaps change some of them. Up to this point she had without doubt treated the Down’s child differently, even if she hadn’t consciously realized it. She had a basic value that said, “I love my other eleven children more than the Down’s child.” That principle had been operating at the subconscious level until we unearthed it that day, but without a doubt it had been affecting her behavior. Now that she had become aware of it, though, she was in a position to change it, and at the same time change her behavior.

Finding the Sense of Urgency

Not long after that experience, I found myself in Hong Kong, teaching about eighty-five people in a public seminar sponsored by Dow Chemical. Teaching this principle in foreign countries is interesting because of the different cultures and different perspectives on morality you sometimes find. When I reached the point in the seminar where I ask for a volunteer who has a child under the age of two, a man from New Delhi, India, raised his hand. I started with the beam on the ground, took a twenty-dollar bill from my wallet, and said to him, “Would you come across this I beam for twenty dollars?” He sat there, very reflective for a moment, then said, “No, I wouldn’t.” A bit stunned, I took him up to one hundred dollars. He still wouldn’t come. I took him up to a thousand dollars, then ten thousand dollars. This man would not come across the I beam sitting on the ground for any amount of money. I said, “Well, I obviously picked the wrong guy. Tell me why you wouldn’t come across for money.” He said, “I don’t display any kind of behavior for money.”

I picked another gentleman, a Chinese fellow from the mainland, and took him through the process. I put him on the World Trade Center, we reached the point where I had his two-year-old hanging over the edge, and I was watching the man from India out of the corner of my eye. The intensity with which he was watching me and listening to what I said was absolutely incredible. When I reached the point where I asked the Chinese fellow if he would come across for his two-year-old, he immediately said, “Of course, I would come across.” I then turned back to the Indian

gentleman and asked, “Would you come across now?” He responded with an immediate and unequivocal “Yes!”

I looked at him for a moment and said, “Isn’t that interesting. You wouldn’t come across for any amount of money when the beam was on the ground, but you would come across at 1,360 feet for your child. Do you understand the point I’m trying to make?” He began weeping uncontrollably in front of eight-five people and said, “I understand what you are talking about.” It was a powerful moment for everyone in the room.

When people have those kinds of emotions about identifying what really matters to them, something happens inside. They start looking at daily activities in an entirely different light. They start asking uncomfortable questions like, “Is what I’m doing today what really matters to me in my life?”

This is what prioritizing is all about. The I beam example helps people clear all the clutter from their minds and focus on what is truly most important to them. And when they realize how important certain values are to them, suddenly they experience a sense of urgency that wasn’t there before. Activities that were always important now become both important and urgent, and when that happens, behavior changes.

Shortly after we started Franklin Quest in 1983, I was doing a pilot seminar in Atlanta, Georgia. We hoped it would open the door to six corporations for us; we had ten people from each corporation in attendance. This was a two-day seminar, and the first day we talked about governing values. Everybody was quite excited at the end of the day, except one man. After everyone else left the room, this guy walked down the center aisle. He was so angry his face was ashen. He stopped about four feet from me, hands in his pockets, and said, “Hyrum, I did not spend two hundred and sixty-five dollars to come to a time management class and have religion thrown at me.” I knew what was bugging him, but I was surprised at my reaction. In fact, I couldn’t believe what I said to him. I looked him in the eye and said, “Hold it. Before you say something you’ll regret, go home, ask yourself tonight if there’s anything you’d cross that I beam for. If there’s not, don’t come back tomorrow, and I’ll refund your money.” He said, “Okay, Smith,” and he stormed out.

It was an ugly experience; and I couldn’t sleep that night. The next morning I was there at 7:30, one hour early. I was up front preparing my overhead slides, and this man came in forty-five minutes early. He didn’t make a peep, but came down the center aisle and sat in the very first chair. The chair made a noise when he sat down, so I turned around, and there he sat, just scowling at me. My whole system stopped.

I said, “Good morning.”

“Damn you!” he answered.

“What’s your problem?” I said.

“There are some things I’d cross that crummy I beam for.”

I said, “Yeah, I don’t care what your background is, everybody has governing values.”

Then he relaxed, and said something I will never forget. “You know what, Hyrum?” he said, “I’m not doing a thing about them.”

Here was a senior vice-president of the Coca Cola Company with its home office in Atlanta. He had found some things in his life that mattered a lot. And he was nowhere near giving

them the attention they deserved. We sat down for thirty minutes before the seminar and for an hour after. In those two discussions I discovered that he was in the middle of a very ugly divorce. Attorneys were involved. I learned later that he left the seminar, wrote down his own governing values, made an appointment with his estranged wife, attorneys in the next room, showed her his list of values, and she was blown away. She left that meeting, made a list of her own values, they got back together a second time, compared them, and they were almost identical. Now, let me stress this—two individuals’ governing values are *never* identical.

Not surprisingly, they put their marriage back together. For the first time in his whole career, his corporate life, he started controlling events around what really mattered to him. My point is this: *Everyone has governing values*. But those values are unique to the individual. They come from the way we were raised as children, from the experiences we’ve had, from our talents and interests and unique personalities. That’s why I don’t even try to suggest what values you should have. All I’m interested in is helping you discover what they are, and then using them to plan your daily activities. Why?” So that you can experience inner peace.

Personal Constitutions

Exactly what is the Constitution of the United States of America? Have you ever wondered about that? The dictionary defines a constitution as a “system of fundamental laws and principles of a government, state, society, corporation, etc.” It’s the “etc.” I’d like to talk about, but first let’s explore the notion of fundamental principles.

In 1787, six years after the end of the American Revolution, representatives from the thirteen states sat down in a convention and decided that the Articles of Confederation weren’t working. That convention was all about discovering the highest priorities and values of this new country. In essence, these men said, “We’ve just crossed a hellacious I beam, the Revolutionary War. What did we cross it for?” And in that convention, principles began to surface—ideas like justice, domestic tranquility, common defense, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, due process, the right to a speedy trial, the right to vote, and the notion that a people can be united under a strong central government but still be protected from government abuses by certain checks and balances. And to make these principles and values clearer, they went through the painstaking process of writing them down in a form that representatives from all thirteen states could agree on. These written principles are our Constitution. And *it is* ours. The first seven words tell the whole world who claims authorship for this document: *We, the people of the United States*. No law is enacted in any state in this country until it is measured against this set of values for consistency.

Do you know which elderly gentleman had a great deal to do with the writing of the Constitution? Benjamin Franklin. He was eighty-one years old. And it was appropriate that he was chosen a delegate to the convention, because he had lived this principle for more than half a century. He had written his own personal constitution—his thirteen virtues—at a young age and had worked at living them his whole adult life.

I am now going to ask you to do the same thing Ben Franklin did, the same thing the representatives from the thirteen states did. You are the “etc.” in the dictionary definition above. I want you to *write your own constitution*, a prioritized list of your governing values with a brief paragraph describing what each one means to you. Over time, as you grow and change, you will

probably want to revise or amend your constitution, just as we have done in the United States in order to meet changing times and challenges. But the fundamentals of our constitution shouldn't change a great deal. That is why I want you to spend some time on this—it may take as much as five to seven hours—so that you're certain you've reached your core values and can use them to guide your daily activities.

Quite frankly, the I beam scenario is a bit heavy. I've been to the top of the World Trade Center and looked over the edge, and I found myself saying, "Hyrum, there isn't anything you would cross the I beam for." But when I'm totally honest with myself, I believe that the first three of my sixteen governing values would move me onto that I beam. So would the ones that deal with my family. The others are important to me, but not so important that I'd risk my life for them.

Now, to give you a concrete example of what I've been talking about, I'm going to share with you an abbreviated version of my sixteen governing values. Notice that I state these values and their explanations as affirmations. I am not perfect, but as I read my values, I find it helpful to imagine myself as I want to be. Just as an architect imagines the finished building as he is drawing and reviewing the plans, I imagine a "finished" Hyrum Smith as I review my governing values.

1. I love God with all my heart, mind, and strength.

As the scriptures and the prophets have commanded since the beginning, I seek first the Kingdom of God. I exhibit my love for the Lord by living his laws. I pray often, expressing my appreciation and love for all I have. Most of all, I exhibit my love by the life I live and by my untiring effort to serve him in whatever capacity I am called.

2. I love my neighbor as myself.

I recognize and accept the fact that all men and women are equal in the sight of God. I never do anything in any way to harm or destroy the self-worth of another human being. As far as I am able, I aid all people in their needs. Charity is my mortal quest, "the ability to separate behavior from the human being." I do not criticize anyone's beliefs. I honor the individual and his rights to exist, think, feel, and believe the way he chooses.

3. I obey all the commandments of God.

The commandments of God are clear descriptions of natural laws of the universe. When I obey any natural law, I have a credible claim to the natural consequences of that law. I obey the commandments for two reasons: 1) God asked me to, and 2) they work.

4. I am humble.

The definition of humility that works for me is: The realization of our dependence on God. I recognize that everything I have, and, ever will have or be is a direct gift from God. Humility is not weakness, merely a recognition of my nothingness in the universe.

5. I am an outstanding husband and father.

I take sufficient, meaningful time with my wife and my children to help them in their spiritual, intellectual, social, professional, physical, and financial needs. I love my wife with care, respect, and kindness. I build strong family unity. I build self-esteem in my children and help them maximize their potential.

6. I honor the memory of my father and mother.

My parents gave me life, taught me the basic principles of Christian living, and set a marvelous example for me to follow. (My father passed away more than a quarter of a century ago. My mother died in 1992, and I made certain that she was cared for to the day she passed away.)

7. I foster intellectual growth.

A man can think no deeper than his vocabulary will allow him to. I read regularly each day. I select my reading from the best books and articles of the day. One cannot teach from an empty well.

8. I am honest in all things.

I am honest with myself first, recognizing that to be honest with my fellow men requires that I first be honest with myself. I listen to my conscience on all decisions. The Golden Rule is a natural law of the universe. It works.

9. I use excellent speech.

The ability to communicate orally is a gift. I never use profanity. I use the best English and grammar I know. When a concept is served well, people listen and learn.

10. I maintain a strong and healthy body.

My body is a temple of God that houses my spirit. Maintaining my governing values is not possible without being in excellent shape. I eat, sleep, and exercise in such a manner as to maintain a high level of energy. I take nothing into my body that will in any way detract from my ability to perform at my peak on a consistent basis. I eliminate negative energy.

11. I value my time.

A natural by-product of high self-esteem is an increase in the value of time. Managing time is nothing more than gaining control of the events in my life. In a period of solitude every day, I evaluate the events of my life for that day. In this period of introspection, I determine the sequence of events that will have the greatest value to me. Inner peace can come only when I manage what I do according to my governing values. I and my colleagues have developed the Franklin Day Planner to aid myself and others in this quest.

12. I am financially independent.

I have developed an income that will be present whether I am capable of working or not. My family's needs are taken care of in such a way that they will never be without food, shelter, transportation, or education.

13. I have a period of solitude daily.

The magic three hours, from 5:00 to 8:00 A.M., are practiced in my home six days a week (and two hours on Sunday). During this period, I teach my family, read, develop my plan for the day, spend time in prayer both personally and with my family. This experience is the beginning of peace for each day.

14. I change people's lives.

I teach correct principles and do so in such a way that people will be motivated to experiment with and utilize them. Once these principles are internalized, people will govern themselves in a manner that will bring greater control and inner peace.

15. I listen well.

I listen carefully to all input, both positive and negative, weigh it, and then respond with respect and love.

16. I have order in my life at all times.

I maintain a sense of order in all aspects of my life. My physical surroundings are always clean, organized, and structured so that they bring calm into my life. My personal hygiene is immaculate, as are my personal habits.

Now, as you can see, this is a tall order. I'm not perfect. I'm not even close. My wife once read these paragraphs and asked, "When, Hyrum, when?" But I've set my goals high. I can't help but set them high, because my goals are tied directly to my core values, and the things I value are extremely important to me. If I can keep this vision of the "finished" Hyrum before my eyes on a daily basis, I will find it easier to do the things that will help me be the person I want to be.

Remember that these are the governing values I've identified in my life. To you and others, a different set of values will emerge as life's highest priorities. Here is a personal Constitution shared with me by a young working mother who attended one of our seminars and identified her governing values:

1. I am a patient, understanding mother.

Long-range Goal: Happy, unstressed, loving children

I make time for my children, taking comp time when necessary and reserving my weekends to spend quality time with them. I put myself in their shoes before I decide on discipline, and believe that I do not have to inflict physical pain on them when trying to teach them to do things that I don't think are acceptable. I love my children unconditionally, and I make sure they know I love them even though I may not approve of some of their actions. I don't sweat the small stuff and let it affect my basic relationship with my children.

2. I grow intellectually.

Long-range Goal: Better education and larger fund of knowledge

I listen with an open mind to what people have to say and take in what I think might enhance my world. I read things relating to all aspects of my life (job, kids, the world in general) and seek to internalize worthwhile things. I seek opportunities for formal education that will help me learn and grow. I learn everything I can about my department and company that will enhance my ability to do a better job.

3. I am generous.

Long-range Goal: For the memory of my parents' generosity to live in me forever

I remember the generosity of my parents and seek to ensure that their example will live in me always. I help people out whenever I see a need, and expect nothing in return. I give my kids time and love, along with little surprises.

4. I love God.

Long-range Goal: Religious harmony among my family

I appreciate all that God has given me and love him unconditionally. I talk to my children about God's love. I show in my own life that actions are more important than words when

it comes to being a good Christian. I take my children to church when they are an appropriate age to appreciate what is being said.

5. I am kind to myself.

Long-range Goal: Less stress, more organization

I regularly exercise and keep myself physically fit. I make sure there is enough time when I get home to relax and plan my day before work starts. I blow off things that are not critical to the happiness of myself, children, or husband. I love each day of my life and do not waste time on unproductive feelings. I concentrate on the positive in all situations. I have the strength of my convictions, no matter how unpopular they may be to others.

6. I love and appreciate my husband.

Long-range Goal: Harmony, happy home for us and children, “forever” love

I regularly arrange to have times of undivided attention for my husband (away from our kids). I listen to his frustrations without becoming impatient. I do things to promote long-term happiness between us. I am grateful to God for each day with this wonderful man, and I tell him daily how much I appreciate his love. I concentrate on the positive and minimize the little faults that can bug me.

7. I am productive.

Long-range Goal: More efficient, productive output at work and home

I realistically plan my day every morning. I concentrate on the things I need to do rather than just the things I want to do. I give my boss “his money’s worth” every day that I work.

8. I am financially secure.

Long-range Goal: Ability to relax and enjoy life without financial strain

I make sure that I spend less than I earn and save something each month for a rainy day, no matter what. I contribute to my 401k plan and my IRA each year as part of my preparation for retirement and the future. I buy savings bonds for my children’s college education whenever money is left over from the budget.

Here’s another example shared by a seminar participant, written in a crisp, concise shorthand style:

A1. I am in good health.

1. I watch what I eat.
2. I take vitamins regularly.
3. I will stop smoking.
4. I will exercise more.
5. I will lose weight.
6. I am reducing stress.

A2. I have a happy marriage.

1. I communicate with my spouse.
2. I consider her thoughts, feelings, and needs.
3. I enjoy her company.

A3. I control my life (time).

1. I am spending time with my family.

2. I think positively.
3. I am planning future and everyday events.

A4. I am financially free.

1. We are planning our future together.
2. I watch what I spend.
3. I am developing opportunities for supplemental income.

A5. I am dependable.

1. People can trust me.
2. I am on time.
3. I do my best in everything.
4. I am honest.
5. I am rock solid.

A6. I learn about new ideas.

1. I look for new ways to do things.
2. I listen to new ideas.
3. I learn new ideas.

A7. I am secure in what I do.

1. I think logically.
2. I decide what to do.
3. I act on my decisions.
4. I am persistent to the end.

A8. I believe in God-given attributes.

1. I believe in positive attitude.
2. I believe in mental power.
3. This makes me more confident.
4. I can do anything I put my mind to.

A9. I am efficient and detailed.

1. I look for ways to do things better.
2. I keep track of events.
3. I keep good records.
4. I think about problems and/or situations.
5. I do things right the first time.

As you can see, the exact words and the form in which they are written don't matter. Your personal constitution is meant only to be seen by you and those you choose to share it with. The important thing is to identify your personal governing values and to put into words that are meaningful to you some descriptive statements about what those values mean in your life.

Now it's your turn. Take the time necessary to identify your governing values. This will probably be one of the most difficult things you will ever do, but it will also be one of the most rewarding. As those things that really are of greatest importance in your life begin to emerge on paper, you will experience a sense of clarity and purpose unlike anything you have felt before. And you'll also find that the act of identifying and writing them down will suggest many things that will start you on the road to doing something about those values.

To help you, here is a list of governing values that resulted from a nationwide survey conducted in 1992 by Franklin Quest Co. We asked people to identify those things of highest priority in their lives. While everyone had his or her own way of describing these values, the answers taken together clearly grouped themselves into the categories listed below. The results represent a cross section of those things people across America feel are of greatest importance and value in their lives. They are ranked according to the number of responses received for a particular category.

1. Spouse
2. Financial security
3. Personal health and fitness
4. Children and family
5. Spirituality/Religion
6. A sense of accomplishment
7. Integrity and honesty
8. Occupational satisfaction
9. Love for others/Service
10. Education and learning
11. Self-respect
12. Taking responsibility
13. Exercising leadership
14. Inner harmony
15. Independence
16. Intelligence and wisdom
17. Understanding
18. Quality of life
19. Happiness/Positive attitude
20. Pleasure
21. Self-control
22. Ambition
23. Being capable
24. Imagination and creativity
25. Forgiveness
26. Generosity
27. Equality
28. Friendship
29. Beauty
30. Courage

The survey was done to assist us in the development of ValuesQuest™, a software package for personal computers that is designed to help people identify their governing values and define long-range goals to fully implement those governing in their lives. The software will walk you through the process and help you organize your own personal constitution. (If you have a PC, this interactive software may be helpful. For more information about *ValuesQuest*, or about Franklin Quest's videocassette, *Finding Your Values, Reaching Your Goals*, call the toll-free number listed at the end of this book.)

Remember that your governing values are yours alone, so don't feel that you must be restricted to those on the list. If something else is important to you, it's important. You don't have to defend it to me or anyone else. There are no "incorrect" answers.

Once you've identified your unique set of governing values, you've built the foundation of your personal productivity pyramid (or fulfillment pyramid, if you prefer), the larger framework in which your governing values, long-range and intermediate goals, and daily activities can all be focused to help you achieve the thing we all desire in life: inner peace. We'll talk about the pyramid and the importance of prioritizing your governing values in Law 3.