

Twenty Words

That Will Change Your Life Forever

Establishing
Life Changing
Core Values



By Mark Cress

Founder / President, Corporate Chaplains of America

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Dedicated To:

My Precious Linda

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“INTRODUCTION”

In the early days of building Corporate Chaplains of America for the glory of Jesus in the workplace, we adopted a mission statement for the organization that stands basically unchanged: “To enter the workplace and build relationships with employees with the hope of gaining permission to share the life changing Good News of Jesus Christ in a non-threatening manner.” Not long after this, the following corporate vision statement was adopted by our team: “To establish a team of over 1,000 full time chaplains serving over one million employees by 2012.” Through the years, we have had a lot of fun incorporating these two themes into the life of our work. At least once a year we would have a contest to see which chaplain could say the mission statement with the most full-size marshmallows in his or her mouth. A record set by Chaplain Jerry Weaver of our Atlanta team in the late 1990s still stands at 31. Trust me – you would have to have seen it to believe it!

Not long after we adopted these statements, it occurred to me that reaching them would require God’s anointing and a set of “core values” in my life equal to the task. I prayed and asked God to give me an internal vision for the values He wanted for me and our chaplains. It wasn’t long until the 20 words that are the foundation for this book began to stir in my heart. I committed them to paper and glued them onto a piece of cardboard about the size of a business card. Many times a day, I would look at the card and ask God to allow me to actually live them out in my life. At our very next meeting with our chaplain staff, I made a similar card for each chaplain and held a brief training session about the concept of our holding individual “core values”.

Much time has passed since that first day when I began to carry the “Mark’s Core Values” card. I now have these “Twenty Words That Will Change Your Life Forever” printed on the back of my own business cards. My desire is to have them be clearly integrated into my character. Although there have been times in the past when I have failed them, having these “core values” as a very personal part of my life has never failed me. Looking back, it is the times when I am walking closest to Jesus and am most faithful to these 20 words that represent my happiest and most fulfilling moments as a husband, dad, ministry leader, and friend.

I recommend you begin this journey as I did, prayerfully asking God to use the simplicity of these 20 words to establish Himself more deeply in the routines of your daily life. My greatest prayer for you is that He will honor that prayer and give you peace that passes all understanding and joy unspeakable and full of his Glory.

Forget about any misconceptions you may have about books and Bible studies. This book is designed to help you make a genuine change in your life that will last forever. So throw out any old ideas and start with a clean slate.

Step One:

In a conversation with God (a prayer) right now, ask Him to use the words of this book to make a change in your life that will be worth a million times the effort you put into it. The prayer might go something like this:

“Lord Jesus, use the words on these pages and your Word in this book to transform my life. Through your Holy Spirit, take me to a new level of relationship with you, my family, and my friends. Place in me a set of lifetime “core values” that will cause others to want what they see in my life.”

Step Two:

Forget seeing this book as some kind of quick read, one night stand, “fix me date”. Instead, dedicate one week of your life to becoming immersed in each of the “core values”. Focus in on how God can use each value to transform your life forever.

Step Three:

Find a friend or group of friends to go through this process with you. Write in the book ... really “dog ear” it up. Have a goal that by the time you finish the book, it will look like it has been with you on a journey around the world and has the travel scars to show for it.

Step Four:

Commit in your heart right now to stay with the project until God has completed his work of placing a real set of lifetime “core values” in your life. Expect results and use positive “self talk” to stay motivated to see the project through. God cannot wait to work with you in this process. However, you should also expect opposition. Satan is real and is not excited about any of us drawing closer to God or having any values in our life, much less a genuine set of spiritual “core values.”

Step Five:

Set a goal for completion. Look at a calendar right now and see what the date will be 11 weeks from now. Write that date in this book and ask God to help you finish this spiritual project by that date.

Now get after it! My prayer is that through the investment of your time and energy with this book, God will manifest Himself in your life in ways you could never imagine. I pray that He will use you as an agent of change in a hurting world that needs Him desperately, and that He will surprise and amaze you to the point that your life will never be the same again.

Blessings,

Mark Cress

April 2005

— Chapter One —

Core Value Number One

“Trust God”

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not
on your own understanding, in all your ways
acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”*

Proverbs 3:5-6

“TRUST GOD”


Sometimes we just don’t “get it”, do we? We aren’t really sure what God is up to in our lives or anywhere else in the world for that matter. A phrase that became heavily used in the early days of the information age probably said it best: There are times when we “just don’t know what we don’t know”. Other times are even more interesting. These are the times when we think we know so much that we become blinded to what is truly in our best interest. Whatever the case, it is often difficult to fully trust God for His perfect will for our lives. In one form or another, many times we revel and even thrive on being control freaks. Who knows when this really starts in our lives? Maybe it’s that first time we stand at the end of the diving board at the swimming pool and decide not to jump into the deep water. Or the time as a child when one of our parents is coaxing us to jump into their arms from what seems like the top of Mount Everest, and instead of jumping into the arms of a loving parent, we hesitate and crawl down on our bellies, never to jump again. Who knows or even cares when it starts? The fact is that for most of us, it does, and at that moment we begin a lifelong process of holding back. All the while, God is there saying, “Jump, jump, jump! I’ll never let you down. I’ll be here no matter what. Jump, for crying out loud!”

It took a while, but the greatest businessman who ever lived, Solomon, finally “got it” when he said: “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.*” (Proverbs 3:5-6) Think about the context of this statement for a moment. Business leaders pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for consulting advice of all kinds, and right here in just a few words we get the wisest of counsel from one of the greatest business guys of all time and it’s totally free. This is the advice from a person who had it all, did it all, saw it all, and practically knew it all. As much as it worked for him thousands of years ago, it will still work for us today and therefore becomes the cornerstone for the “core values” of our lives. The day we finally decide to “give up, let go, and let God” sets the stage for opening the door of God’s richest blessings in our lives. It may take a lot of control to give up control, but a lifetime of “joy” (one of the fruits of the Spirit) will certainly be the result. God is real, God is true, and He only wants the very best for you. He is our only safety net in this world. What is keeping us from really trusting Him for every aspect of our lives?

Let's explore a few possibilities together before we decide to totally give up on our controlling ways:


1. Do you think Solomon and the words of the Bible are trustworthy for today? Why or why not?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



2. What kind of problems do my control freak tendencies cause with family, friends, work associates, and others?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____




3. Am I sick and tired of trying to be the glue that holds my entire universe together? What can I do about it?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



4. What will it really cost me to totally give control of everything that happens in my life to God?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



5. How would my life be better if I took Solomon's consulting advice from Proverbs?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Core Verses

📖 Trust God while you are waiting. (Psalm 27:13-14)


📖 Nothing is too hard for God. (Jeremiah 32:17, 26-27)


📖 Simply trust God. (Psalm 37:3, Psalm 42:5)

📖 God cares for people who put their trust in Him. (Nahum 1:7)


Action Steps for Implementing the Core Value

“TRUST GOD”


 Start today. Remember the old Chinese proverb, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” Take the first step today. Start telling yourself, your family and your friends that you are “letting go and letting God” have total control of your life.


 Encourage a friend to join the journey with you.


List three possible friends: • _____
• _____
• _____

 Make a list of the things in your life you try to control and then talk to God about helping you break your bad habits of being a control freak.

• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____



 Practice the discipline of silence before God. Start with just five minutes once a day. In doing this, you are starting the process of giving up control of the most precious thing you try to control: your time. Listen for God to speak in your heart!

 Start every day, while still lying in bed, by voicing a prayer asking God to be in total control of every aspect of your life.

