

BECOMING A
RELIABLE MAN

OF FAITH AND
PRACTICE



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Sometimes a very special person comes along who can make a great difference in your life. I am blessed to have married such a person. My precious wife, Dorothy, is not only my best friend and helpmate, she has been my faithful co-laborer in this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Author's Preface	11
------------------------	----

Part One THE FOUR FOUNDATIONAL VALUES OF PERSONAL RELIABILITY

1 Personal Authenticity:	
A Measure of Our Resolve to Live a Consistent Life	17
Embrace the Obligations of Manhood	21
Be Diligent in the Use of Your Faith	25
Work to Keep a Clear Conscience	30
Subject Yourself to Reality Checks	34
Let Your Life Be Your Message	38
2 Ethical Dependability:	
A Measure of Our Trustworthiness in	
Practical Matters	43
Acquire a Disciplined and Prudent Life	47
Communicate with Intellectual Integrity	49
Be Governed by Moral Conscience	52
Demonstrate Task Faithfulness	56
Use Reasonable Judgment	62
3 Moral Purity:	
A Measure of Our Cleansing and Restoration	
from Sin	67
Purge Corrupt Imaginations	75
Resist the Power of Temptation	80
Take Control of Money	86
Abstain from Sexual Immorality	93
Follow the Path of God's Favor	100

4 Spiritual Authority:	
A Measure of the Power and Favor of God	
in Our Life	105
Fulfill the Calling of a Vocation	111
Establish Order and Unity at Home	115
Extend the Church into the World	120
Resolve Conflicts Peacefully	125
Live by Faith and Principle	133

Part Two
THE FOUR FOUNDATIONAL VALUES
OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

5 Kingdom Identity:	
A Measure of Our Participation	
in Genuine Church Life	141
Meet with the Church at Home and in Public	145
Teach and Admonish One Another	151
Minister the Gifts of the Holy Spirit	158
Practice Generosity and Benevolence	165
Celebrate Truth and Faithfulness	172
6 Spiritual Accountability:	
A Measure of Our Practice of Spiritual Disciplines	179
Read and Study the Bible	184
Continue to Repent and Forgive	189
Yield to the Holy Spirit	194
Pray for Your Family and Friends	199
Stand Firm in Your Faith	206
7 Perceptual Clarity:	
A Measure of Our Training to Discern	
Good and Evil	213
Pursue the Truth with Heartfelt Empathy	218
Inquire, Probe, and Investigate Thoroughly	224
Carefully Examine the Crucial Facts	230
Test the Validity of Every Doctrine	235
Follow the Facts to Their Spiritual Source	242

8 Sovereign Dependency:	
A Measure of Our Trust in God's Provision	249
Expect the Lord to Be Your Shepherd	253
Put Your Desires in Perspective	259
Refuse to Rely on the World or Religion	266
Don't Burn Inside Because of Evil Doers	272
Patiently Grow into Mature Eldership	278
Participate in the Restoration of the Church	284
Appendix: Historical Sources.	288

Author's Preface

When I became a follower of Christ and began to study the Bible, I realized that the success I had always desired would not come from trying to obtain God's blessing on what I wanted, but in yielding to what He wanted me to do with my life. 2 Chronicles 16:9 (NAS) reminds us that "the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." As I began to learn what it meant to give Him all my heart, I also discovered that God's plan for each of us depends upon our *becoming a reliable man*, someone whom He, our family, and others can rely upon. I also learned that if I would let Him have His way in my life, He would bless and discipline my talents so that I could enjoy and be satisfied with my livelihood.

A man must divide his energies into two primary areas of responsibility: his personal life at home and his work. Although the things we do at home and at work are very different, the values that make us who we are at both places are the same, no matter how we earn our living. They directly influence our relationships and leadership style, how well we do our job, and every decision we make. These values, along with the strategies that support them, provide our family, friends, and co-workers with the sense of confidence they will need to respect and trust us. The Four Foundational Values of Personal Reliability are:

Personal Authenticity:

a measure of our resolve to live a consistent life

Ethical Dependability:

a measure of our trustworthiness in practical matters

Moral Purity:

a measure of our cleansing and restoration from sin

Spiritual Authority:

a measure of the power and favor of God in our life

Now, after more than twenty-five years of apprenticeship, I can testify both personally and professionally about the great benefit of living by these biblical values. But as I grew in personal reliability

and became a more disciplined follower of Christ, there was an ominous feeling growing in my heart that my church experiences were somehow in conflict with the purposes of God. I often found myself sitting in a typical “worship” service with a nagging feeling that something was not right. I wasn’t thinking about my own personal preferences for music or what color the carpet should be, but about what scriptural purposes were being fulfilled by the church services my friends and I were attending. I wanted to know what things were essential for spiritual growth, what hindered it, and what a spiritually strong and emotionally mature man might do differently.

One of the primary purposes of the church is to fulfill the requirement found in Ephesians 4:13 to produce *teleios* men who are “mature or complete” in Christ. That means we should all be growing in our ability to think and behave like a disciple of Christ as a result of our participation in church life. But men often describe their experiences in church as dull or monotonous, with sometimes-manipulative sermons that have no relevance to their daily grind. Many are put off by the repeated emphasis on money, building programs, and membership which draw our attention away from the Lord to the institution’s purposes. Some leave quietly, while others depart in anger because of inconsistencies that church leaders could not reasonably explain.

My research included an in-depth study of the mission of the church as found in the Scriptures; a review of church history and its effect on our current practices; a thorough evaluation of the administrative, educational and service processes of the church; and hundreds of counseling and consulting interviews. As my knowledge of these things increased, I began to understand why the church does not routinely produce mature, reliable men. Even a casual analysis of most people’s church experience will reveal the inefficiencies, moral failures, idealistic delusions, and sincere miscalculations of its leaders. But it’s not just that things don’t always work the way they should, it’s worse than that. The church often harms people instead of helping, producing spiritually emasculated and emotionally flawed men who only perpetuate its mistakes.

Even so, I found that most men are interested in a lifestyle with Christ that will pass the test of common sense. And when we read and interpret the Bible, free from institutional influences, we can see that God offers men a richly satisfying agenda for life. Isaiah 33:6 promises that “He will be the sure foundation for [our] times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge.” The Four Foundational Values of Spiritual Growth are:

Kingdom Identity:

a measure of our participation in genuine church life

Spiritual Accountability:

a measure of our practice of spiritual disciplines

Perceptual Clarity:

a measure of our training to discern good and evil

Sovereign Dependency:

a measure of our trust in God’s provision

The most important part of a man’s life and work is his commitment to becoming more reliable by allowing the Lord to make the essential changes that are needed in his heart. God has a specific plan for every man, and when our first priority is to seek His will, we are on our way to being restored or strengthened where we need it most. When Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28), He was speaking to every man who is bearing the weight of his responsibilities at home and at work. And when He said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me” (verse 29), He was calling each of us to obey His Word.

This book was written for the man who has felt the Lord tugging at his heart to make some changes. It is my testimony to the grace of God and what I have learned about His purposes for men. With a background in engineering and business, I spent five years as an associate pastor at a large, ministry-oriented church, while I continued my graduate studies in management. Since 1985 I have spent about half my time making a living as a management consultant specializing in organizational design and process management. This has enabled me to fulfill my ministry calling in

various missions to reach men for Christ, including extensive pastoral counseling and nine years traveling to St. Petersburg, Russia to develop charitable medical programs for the poor and elderly.

At the beginning of each chapter, I have written stories about some of the men I met in Russia and my encounters with them. Each account emphasizes the importance of the value in the chapter title. Then I have described five supporting strategies with stories and examples from my family, church, ministry, and business experiences over the span of my walk with Christ. To protect the privacy of individuals and families, I have changed the names of some persons and places, and other details not significant to the lesson. It is my desire to convey the important facts and principles of each story without bringing harm to any person. I hope that sharing these things will help you gain a clearer perspective of your own circumstances and connect more personally with the Lord.

Larry Kennedy