

# THE NAVIGATOR

*Charting your Course for a Purposeful Life*  
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## **From Values to Mandates to Blessings**

We all live with mandates, both external and internal. The internal mandates are better known as values. Many of us felt compelled to vote for certain candidates in the November election. For most of us, this compelling need is entirely based on our values. While we may see ourselves as free to decide, free to change our minds and vote for whomever we wish, ultimately, what we do is determined by our internal mandates. They drive our decisions as surely as do our needs for food and shelter. The key to successful living is our awareness of our values, our mandates; then our ability to prioritize them; and then most importantly, the commitment to base our actions on our values.

Any of you who work with me privately know that one of the first tasks in our work together is to identify and clarify your values. And you also know that the reason we do this is unless you know what is driving you, you have no ability to manage it. You just react.

*What you are aware of you are in control of; what you are not aware of is in control of you.*  
– Anthony de Mello

The mature step is to find out what values drive you, and thoughtfully assess possible updates you may be able to make. Sometimes our values evolve, usually not very much, but there is room to change and grow.

This became curiously evident to me as I reflected on what I would do with my vote for the highest office in the country. The more I thought and talked about it, the more aware I became that my voting would be determined by a perceived mandate I harbor from my parents. I hasten to add that this is a mandate I like and that I have been guided by for years. And maybe it is because I often help families identify their values, that it was interesting watching this force at work in my life in the months leading to the election. This very process has also caused me lately to think about how the same values work in our marriages and with our children. Certainly, values that drive our political actions are reflected in how we manage our relationships and dynamics among our closest family members.

Big events cause many of us to look at the most important aspects of our lives and consider our legacies. For instance, estate planning attorneys know that there is nothing like a major vacation to motivate the travelers to tune up estate plans. And the recent intense political journey we have all been on has caused me to reflect on how my values play out in my own family life.

As we all know, holiday celebrations can veer off track and be less than fulfilling. Of course, the material gifts are fun. The financial wealth of the family that funds these gifts is an



*The Navigator* is a quarterly newsletter for all who have an interest in wealth. The rich really are different, but not in the ways most people think. Many envy the wealthy and presume they have no problems, but in fact, they face unique psychological challenges. Thayer Willis, LCSW, wealth counselor, speaker and author of *Navigating the Dark Side of Wealth: A Life guide for Inheritors*, helps her clients develop the meaningful lives we all treasure.

important part of life. It needs careful, educated, responsible attention. But it is attending to the financial wealth, or in the case of gift giving, material wealth, with more energy and attention than we devote to the intangible gifts, that can cause us to miss the best part. That “best part” being a deeper personal connection from sharing one’s feelings and values with family members, by talking about this directly with them. We have a holiday tradition I would like to share with you because it has become a treasure for us. With even a moment’s thought you will see how values are at work in this gift.



### **My Gift to You**

Our time for this gift to each other is Christmas morning at breakfast, before we open any other kinds of gifts. Certainly, you could find a place for this in just about any kind of holiday tradition. Regretfully, I don’t remember who told me how to do this, and if you are reading, please remind me so I can give you credit! This gift was given in a generous spirit, and I am happy to pass it on. It’s simple. A few days before Christmas, I set out a big stack of colored index cards. We each take cards and write anything about how and why each family member was a blessing to us this year, being careful to identify who the card is for and to sign it. We all write one card for each family member. On Christmas morning, we put all the cards in a basket, and take turns drawing them out, one at a time. We read the card we’ve drawn, no matter whom it was written by or for, then give it to the person it was written for to keep. Just think for a moment about how this begins the day. Taking the time to focus on and acknowledge the ways our family members are important to us enhances our values of communication, love, appreciation, and gratitude.

If your celebration is Christmas, it is easy to relate the blessings of each other to the immense blessing of God’s gift to us in His precious Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches us to see His love in others. I can’t think of a better way to begin our celebration of His birth.

*Christmas... is not an external event at all, but a piece of one's home that one carries in one's heart.*  
– Freya Stark

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*Beyond Gold: True Wealth for Inheritors*, available on Amazon.com, includes gratitude reminders and coaching in every chapter. You can use this guide to enhance your awareness, understanding, and choices about the blessings in your life.

