

It Takes Less Than

One[®]

Minute

To Suit Up For
The Lord

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**Executive
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It Takes Less Than One Minute to Suit Up for the Lord

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This book is dedicated to:

*Dorothy Blanchard
Norman Vincent Peale
Bob Buford
Phil Hodges
Bill Hybels*

My mom, Dorothy Blanchard, always had a beautiful spirit and great faith in the Lord. Throughout her ninety-five years on this planet she was an inspiration as well as a spiritual guide for me and everyone whose life she touched. Mom used to always ask me why I never wrote a book by myself. She finally got her wish when I wrote *We Are the Beloved*, the first edition of this little book. In fact, one of the joys in the last few months of her life was having me read from this text. I miss you, Mom.

When I finished the first draft of *We Are the Beloved*, I over-nighted a copy to Norman Vincent Peale. At ninety-five he was in poor health and fading fast, but I hoped he would get to see it because Norman had played such an important role in my spiritual journey. When we were working together on *The Power of Ethical Management*, I wasn't a believer. Yet Norman kept telling me, "Ken, the

Lord has always had you on His team; you just haven't suited up yet." It was that statement that inspired the title for this new edition.

Ruth Peale told me Norman had already lost consciousness when the book arrived, but she rushed it to his bedside and said, "Norman, look what Ken has written. And he dedicated it to you." As only Ruth would think to say, she told me, "Ken, I feel he knew what I was saying." I hope so, because Norman Vincent Peale's positive thinking ministry made a difference in my life and the lives of generations of people who were profoundly influenced by his sermons, speeches, radio shows, television appearances and books. While he never got to read this book, Norman's whole life was dedicated to helping others think positively and realize the power that comes with "suiting up" for the Lord.

Bob Buford—coauthor of *Half Time* and founder of The Leadership Network—Phil Hodges, long-time friend and co-founder with me of the Center for FaithWalk Leadership, and Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, also played key roles in my suiting up. I will be talking about them throughout this little book. I feel so blessed to still have them in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	9
My Journey.....	15
Destinations.....	41
Staying on Course.....	63
Onward and Upward with All Your Heart.....	97

Acknowledgments

Bibliography

About the Author

Services Available

INTRODUCTION

A number of years ago I started emphasizing the importance of self-esteem in my leadership and management lectures and seminars. I did this because it was becoming clearer to me that managers today, in a world demanding an empowered workforce, have to be more like cheerleaders, supporters, and encouragers than the judges, critics, and evaluators they have been in the past. Yet, I realized that it is almost impossible for people who don't feel good about themselves to play these new roles. I began to wonder if effective leadership doesn't actually begin on the inside and move out. After all, only people who genuinely like themselves can build up others without feeling it takes something away from themselves.

My sudden concern with self-worth coincided with a renewed spiritual interest. In exploring my own spirituality, I began to sense that the quickest and most powerful way to significantly enhance one's self-worth and make oneself more loving was to awaken spiritually.

I say "awaken" because I have come to believe that all of us develop amnesia after we are born. We begin to forget from where we came. We start to lose touch with home base. In the first *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen included a beautiful story about a little girl by the name of Sachi. The story is all about this amnesia. Soon after her brother was born, little Sachi began to ask her parents to leave her alone with the new baby. They worried that like most four-year-olds, she

might feel jealous and want to hit or shake him, so they said no. But she showed no signs of jealousy. She treated the baby with kindness, and her pleas to be left alone with him became more urgent. Her parents decided to allow it.

Elated, she went into the baby's room and shut the door, but it opened a crack—enough for her curious parents to peek in and listen. They saw little Sachi walk quietly up to her baby brother, put her face close to his and say quietly, “Baby, tell me what God is like. I’m starting to forget.”

It takes us different lengths of time to get back home—to accept that we come from the best lineage there is and have the unconditional love of the Father—the Master of the House. We have “God-esteem” which is more powerful than “self-esteem.”

This book is not about persuading you to believe in God. I think most people believe in God. I once heard it said that not to believe in a Creator makes as much sense as saying the unabridged dictionary is the result of an explosion in a print shop. My hope is to clear up your amnesia and help you remember what you once knew in childlike innocence: that there is something or someone out there bigger than you who has a divine purpose for your life. The first step in any spiritual journey is a longing for home, a yearning to reconnect with something bigger than yourself.

The focus in this book is on suiting up—deliberately accepting on faith God's unconditional love for us as manifested in His gift of grace through His Son, Jesus Christ. In sports, you suit up when it's time to play. Once you get

in uniform, you still might not get sent into the game, but you're ready if the coach needs you. In my travels, I find that most people today are restless and hungry to get "into the game" and experience the deeper meaning of their lives. They just don't know where to start.

Rather than trying to convince you what to do, I'd simply like to share what I believe is an incredibly good deal. When I found out Peter Drucker—the real guru in my field—was a Christian, I asked him why. Peter, with his characteristic, straightforward approach, said, "There is no better deal. Who else has grace?" As I'll reveal in this book, grace answers the questions about self-esteem and self-worth once and for all; for it's the realization that once you receive the Lord's forgiveness through grace, you have all the love you will ever need. You have God-esteem. No amount of striving for approval or achieving greater and greater things will give you more love and acceptance than you already have.

That's why I titled the first edition of this book *We Are the Beloved*—because you already are loved, with no strings attached. Even if you decide that you cannot yet accept God's love, you are still loved by Him. You just miss out on the daily joy of realizing you have the most important teammate you could ever want.

This deal is also incredibly good because it satisfies our longing for meaning and purpose. It lends to everyday life a quality that I think most of us are desperate for today—the sense that we're on our own hero's journey; that spiritually speaking, life can be viewed as a magic carpet ride.

This little book was originally written as a Christmas 1994 gift for the most important people in my life—my family and friends. But so much has happened in my spiritual life in the last decade that it made sense to update my story. Rick Warren, author of *A Purpose Driven Life* and senior pastor of Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California, compares the spiritual journey of a Christian to the four bases on a baseball field. Rick says that getting to first base involves commitment to the Lord by confessing our sins and acknowledging God's grace. Getting to second base is all about growing in our knowledge of the Lord through solitude, prayer, study of scripture and fellowship. The trip from second to third base involves serving the Lord through some ministry. We round third and head for home when we are able to recruit for the Lord and share our faith comfortably with others on a continuous basis.

I've spent a good deal of time over the last ten years growing in my knowledge of the Lord. While I'm far from finished there, in recent years I have begun to focus more energy on serving the Lord and sharing my faith with others.

I turned sixty-five this year along with a bunch of my old buddies. A number of them are retiring and are wondering when I am going to slow down. I talked this over with Zig Ziglar, a legendary motivational teacher and author of *See You at the Top*, who is in his late seventies. Zig reminded me that there is no mention of retirement in the Bible. In fact, except for Jesus, David, Mary and the disciples, few people under seventy made much of a con-

tribution. Zig said, "I'm refiring, not retiring." I like that concept, especially when I take into consideration my involvement in recent years with the Center for FaithWalk Leadership and our Lead Like Jesus movement. Now I am really having a chance to serve the Lord and share my faith with others.

It is through the urging of my family and friends that I agreed to share the original story of my spiritual journey more widely. It is with this same motivation that I do it again. I share my story not because I think it is so extraordinary. In fact, I'm still en route, with much yet to learn about God's unconditional love. I share it because I hope it helps some of you who are thinking seriously about accepting His love, together with all the God-esteem, power, and freedom that it brings.

KEN BLANCHARD
FALL 2004

MY JOURNEY

*The grace of our Lord was poured out on me
abundantly, along with the faith and love
that are in Christ Jesus.*

1 Timothy 1:14

EARLY RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

I grew up in New Rochelle, New York. I was named after a Presbyterian minister. Bob Hartley was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church my parents attended, and his ministry had such a big impact on them that when I was born they gave me the middle name, Hartley. I never got to know Bob Hartley; he died of a heart attack when I was five. But in later years I learned that my coauthor and friend, Norman Vincent Peale, had been a classmate of Reverend Hartley at divinity school.

Over the years my mom repeatedly told me a story about Bob Hartley that will give you a sense of the kind of person he was as well as what an example of “the greatest generation” my father was. My father grew up in Highland Falls, New York, a small town just outside the gate of West Point, the United States Military Academy. My father loved West Point and all the pomp and circumstance surrounding it. But when he graduated from high school his father, a doctor in town, said, “Son, I think you should go away to school.”

Since that was the case and he couldn’t go to West Point, my father decided to go to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

When he graduated in 1924 from the Naval Academy, my father found that in a world that believed it had just fought the “war to end all wars,” there was little need for

It Takes Less Than One Minute to Suit Up for the Lord

naval officers. So after his senior cruise, he entered Harvard Business School, where he majored in finance and ended up working in New York City. In the early 1940s he was being groomed for a vice-presidency with National City Bank when one day he came home and said to my mom, “Honey, I quit today.”

“You did what?” my mother replied.

“I quit,” Dad said. “I told you when we got married that if the country ever got in trouble, I felt I owed it something. Hitler is already a threat to world peace, and it’s only a matter of time until Japan gets into the fray, so I reenlisted.”

This was quite a shock for my mom. I was one year old, my sister Sandy was three, and just when Dad was starting to make some good money, he opted for a lieutenant’s salary in the Navy. Mom went along with it as graciously as she could.

In spite of my father’s zest for action, his first assignment was the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Pearl Harbor came along, and still no change. When it looked like he’d be stuck in dry dock for the duration of the war, he called one of his former classmates—who happened to be head of the Naval Bureau of Personnel in Washington, D.C.—and asked him what he had for an old-timer with no experience. A week later his friend called him back.

“Ted, all I have for a guy with your background is a suicide group going into the Marshall Islands,” he said.

My dad jumped at it—without telling my mom about the suicide part, of course. They gave him command of

twelve LCIs (landing craft infantry). With only small guns to protect themselves, Dad's units were responsible for protecting the marines and frogmen (the SEALs of today) heading into the island beaches that were held down by the Japanese. My dad's friend had been right in calling this a suicide mission; it was one of the most vulnerable positions in the campaign. Seventy percent of Dad's men were killed or wounded. His ships were so close to the beaches that Dad's picture was in *Time* magazine one week: it showed him conducting funeral services for some of his men who'd been hit by explosives that fell short after they were launched from our big ships.

As my dad's ships headed into Saipan for what was expected to be the biggest battle in the Pacific, he wrote to Mom's oldest brother Fred: "Chances of me making it out of this campaign are very slim. I know if anything happens, you'll watch over Dorothy and the kids." To my mother he wrote a second letter, telling her: "Everything is fine here on maneuvers. The only trouble we're encountering is the heat."

Through some strange accident of fate, Dad got the two letters mixed up. My uncle got Mom's "maneuvers" letter, and she got the one about the low probability of survival. Devastated, she ran to the phone and called Reverend Hartley. In ten minutes he was at our front door with a big smile on his face.

"What a blessing!" he exclaimed.

Mom thought the reverend had lost his mind. "What do you mean 'what a blessing'?"

It Takes Less Than One Minute to Suit Up for the Lord

“It’s God’s sign that Ted’s going to be okay,” he said. “The letters getting mixed up means that we’ve been getting too complacent and not praying enough.”

When I told that story about his divinity school classmate to Norman Vincent Peale, he said, “Now that’s good preaching!” Whether it was good preaching or just praying enough, it worked because my dad came home safe and sound.

Soon after the war, Bob Hartley died. We continued to go to the First Presbyterian Church until I was in junior high. Then we moved to the First Methodist Church where a classmate’s father, Harrison Davis, was the minister. Not only was he a good preacher, he was a wonderful guy as well. And besides, they had a better basketball team than the Presbyterian Church had.

Throughout my high school days, I was a regular churchgoer, active in Youth Fellowship. Then I went off to college at Cornell University in Ithaca, in upstate New York. Under the university’s hands-off policy with regard to student religious observances, I started to drift away. With studies and an increasingly busy campus life, I never really found a church to attend in Ithaca.

The summer after I graduated I started to date Margie McKee, who was a fourth generation Cornellian. We were both working in the Ithaca area. I was working as a dorm counselor for the National Science Foundation and playing a lot of golf, while Margie, a speech therapy major, was working at a special camp for handicapped kids. Margie had gone out with a number of my good friends,

and they all said that she was the greatest. In fact, I first called her for a date as a favor to one of my friends. He'd been dating her and was concerned she might be lonely by herself in Ithaca that summer.

When I arrived to pick Margie up for our date I said to her, "Tell me, why are you working out here with all these handicapped kids?" She spoke with such love and compassion about her work with those kids that I fell in love with her during the seven-mile ride into town. By the end of the evening, I was already worrying about how to tell my friend the bad news. Luckily Margie was thinking the same thing. We were married a year later, after Margie's graduation from Cornell. My friend named his first child Ken, so he couldn't have been that mad.

The first year we were married we lived in Hamilton, New York, while I finished my master's degree at Colgate University and Margie worked as a speech therapist for the Madison County schools. When we returned to Cornell the next year for my doctorate and Margie's master's degree, we met a fabulous young minister from the First Presbyterian Church in Ithaca by the name of Paul Clark. He got us gung ho for church again, and we even volunteered to run the junior high school program.

In 1966 we headed out to Ohio University in Athens for my first job as administrative assistant to the dean of the College of Business Administration. Our son, Scott, was just a baby, and Margie was pregnant with Debbie. In Athens we met a wonderful minister at the Methodist church in town and began to be active in that church.

It Takes Less Than One Minute to Suit Up for the Lord

This was the late sixties, a time of much student unrest. The Kent State incident occurred right down the road. We had our own little incident of disillusionment that fit right in with the times. Our minister friend sympathized with students; he was right up front at all the protests and marches. That didn't go over well with his conservative southeastern Ohio congregation. They fired him in what seemed to us a most un-Christian manner.

Disillusionment Sets In

Anger and disillusionment came crashing in on us. We thought, *If that's what Christianity is all about, forget it.* We dropped out. Like so many people, if we went to church at all, it was only on Christmas and Easter. That went on for fifteen years. Unfortunately, since these were the key growing-up years for Scott and Debbie, faith was not a big part of our family's life. In fact, if you'd threatened some punishment for Scott and Debbie unless they could recite the Lord's Prayer, I'm afraid you'd have had to dole out the punishment. We had drifted that far away from the church.

In 1970, we moved to Amherst, Massachusetts where I taught at the University of Massachusetts and Margie worked on her doctorate in communication studies. After six years there, we went to San Diego for a one-year sabbatical leave. Living for a few months in California where sunshine is cheap, we realized that summer in Massachusetts was two weeks of bad skating. As a result, we decided to stay on the West Coast and start our own