

We Are
the
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the
Beloved

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

KEN BLANCHARD

We Are the Beloved
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This book is dedicated to:

Dorothy Blanchard

Bob Buford

Phil Hodges

Bill Hybels

Norman Vincent Peale

My mom has always been a beautiful spirit and had great faith in the Lord. At ninety-one, she remains an inspiration—a spiritual guide for me and everyone whose life she touches.

When we were working together on *The Power of Ethical Management*, Norman Vincent Peale kept telling me, “Ken, the Lord has always had you on His team; you just haven’t suited up yet.” Bob, Phil, Bill, and Norman played key roles in my suiting up. I will be talking about them throughout this little book.

This past Christmas Eve, Norman Vincent Peale passed away quietly at ninety-five. He was at home surrounded by love, peace, and tender care. Norman deserved nothing less. His 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 the life of the beloved.

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-esteem coincided with a renewed spiritual interest. In confronting my own spirituality, I began to sense that maybe the quickest and most powerful way to significantly enhance one's self-esteem and make ourselves more loving people is a spiritual awakening.

I say "awakening" 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. I recently read 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. They 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 feels 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.

This book is not about persuading you to believe in God. I think most people believe in God. 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 you.

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. 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 persuade you what to do, I’d simply like to share what I believe is an incredibly good deal. It answers the questions about self-esteem 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. 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 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 having the most important teammate you could ever have.

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. It is through their urging that I agreed to share the story of my spiritual journey more widely. I share it not because I think it is so extraordinary. In fact, I'm still en route, with much yet to learn. Sometimes we teach what we most need to learn. I needed to write this book as much for me as for you.

I feel like the rabbi who went to live in a corrupt city. Every day he ran through the streets of the city and shouted over and over, "Repent! Turn from your sins. Repent! Turn from your sins." Days led into weeks and weeks led into months and months led into years. Every day the rabbi could be heard shouting his plea. Finally one day a friend asked the rabbi, "No one listens to you; everyone is laughing at you; why do you continue to do this?"

The rabbi was quick to reply: “When I first came here I dreamt of a city turned toward God. I envisioned the city changing. That has not happened, so today I run through the streets shouting my plea to keep the city from changing me.”

This book is a meditation about God’s unconditional love. I hope it helps you to think seriously about accepting this love, together with all the self-esteem, power, and freedom that brings. But if that does not happen, all is not lost.

I still need the message myself.

—KEN BLANCHARD
FALL 1994

We Are the Beloved

MY JOURNEY

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

I TIMOTHY 1:14



grew up in New Rochelle, New York. 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 has repeatedly told me a story about Bob Hartley that will give you a sense of the kind of person he was. As background, my father attended the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. When he graduated in 1924, he found that in a world that believed it had just fought the “war to end all wars” there was little need for naval officers. So, after a 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, “Well, 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. Just when Dad was starting to make some good money, he’d opted for a lieutenant’s salary in the Navy. But Mom went along with it.

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 was 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.”

My dad jumped at it—without telling my mom, 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 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. His ships were so close to the beaches that seventy percent of Dad's men were killed or wounded. Dad's picture was in *Time* magazine one week; it showed him conducting funeral services for some of his men who were 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’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 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.

Throughout high school, I was a regular church-goer, active in Youth Fellowship. Then I went off to college at Cornell. 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. We both were working in the Ithaca area. Margie had gone out with a number of my good

friends, and they all said she was “the greatest.” In fact, I called her for a date as a favor to one of my friends who was concerned she might be lonely.

Margie was a speech therapy major and was working at a special camp for handicapped kids. When I arrived to pick her up, I said, “Tell me what you do out here.” 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.” Margie and I were married a year later, after her graduation from Cornell. My friend named his first child Ken, so he ended up all right too.

The first year we were married we lived in Hamilton, New York, while I finished my master’s degree 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.

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 unChristian manner.

Anger and disillusionment came crashing in on us. We thought, "If that's what church is all about, forget it." We dropped out. Like so many people, we went to church only at Christmas and Easter—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 Ohio. Nor did things change in that department when we moved to Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1970, where I taught at the University of Massachusetts and Margie worked on her doctorate in communication studies. After several years there, we went to San Diego for a one-year sabbatical. Living in California for a few months where sunshine is cheap, we realized that summer in Massachusetts was

two weeks of bad skating. We decided to stay on the West Coast and start our own company. In 1979, Blanchard Training and Development, Inc. (BTD), was launched.

Then *The One Minute Manager*® happened. Spencer Johnson, my coauthor, and I met at a cocktail party in November 1980. Margie met him first and led him over to me.

Spencer was working on a One Minute Parenting book with a psychiatrist. When he explained his approach to parenting, I told him I had been teaching those kinds of things to managers for years.

So I invited him to a seminar I was giving the following Monday at the Rancho Bernardo Inn in San Diego. He came and sat in the back of the room and laughed throughout the day. At the end of the seminar, he ran up to me and said, "Forget parenting! Let's go for managers." That was the birth of *The One Minute Manager*.

We had a first draft ready for people to read in a Winnebago on the way to the Rose Bowl on December 31. We self-published *The One Minute Manager* by May 1981 and introduced it at the National Restaurant Association Convention in Chicago later that month. Dick Gaven, a friend and fraternity brother of mine, was the Director of Education for the association and

got us on the program. Within twenty minutes after the session, we had sold almost a thousand copies of the book in the back of the room. During the next year, with almost no publicity, we sold 20,000 copies, mainly to our Blanchard Training and Development customers.

When Spencer and our literary agent, Margaret McBride, went to New York for meetings in January 1982, they found that many publishers were interested in the book. Two weeks after its publication by William Morrow in September, it was on the *New York Times* best-seller list, where it stayed for the next three years.

Several months after the book was out, I got a call from Phil Hodges, a longtime friend from Cornell, wanting to know if we could get together for a walk on the beach. Phil was a top labor-relations officer for Xerox, working in the Los Angeles area. When we took our walk, Phil asked, “Ken, why do you think *The One Minute Manager* is such a runaway best-seller! Is it that you’re a better writer than anyone else or that you’re smarter than most people!”

I said, “No, Hodge, I don’t think that at all. I’ve thought a lot about it. I think the Lord wanted the book written, and He just used Spencer and me as His channels. When I go back and read the book, I can’t even remember writing certain parts of it. The book seemed to write itself.”