

# PREFACE

## your beliefs

I believe the lives we *live* are the lives we *make*. Call it self-destiny, God's will, karma, good luck, bad luck, whatever. But when you finally sit down at the end of the day and look at yourself in the mirror—after you've scrubbed away all the grime and makeup and truly see yourself and where you're at in this stage of your life, without any pretense or the trappings of your outer façade—the reality of life hits you right between the eyes.

I believe that no matter how many mistakes we've made; how badly we've really, *really* screwed up; how old, worn out, or dejected we've become; as long as there is true, steadfast ambition, all of us have an opportunity for greatness. We all can summon the courage to deal with issues, no matter how overwhelming, painful, or degrading, that may have plagued or even paralyzed us in the past—once and for all. With determination we can stretch beyond the everyday barriers to better ourselves. Learning from our prior experiences, we can, and should, aspire to fulfill our dreams, making life better not only for ourselves but for others around us during the course of our life's journey.

I believe it isn't a requirement to have experienced a perfect childhood (if there is such a thing) to lead a satisfying and productive life. You don't have to be raised in a majestic, cherry-blossom-filled neighborhood; attend an Ivy League university and belong to Kappa-Delta-Smell-Pa sorority; obsess over having a rock-solid not-a-gram-of-fat body, thick shiny hair, surgically enhanced body parts, and blinding pearl-white teeth; or reside in a mansion behind iron gates, with a second estate on the southern coast, to obtain and preserve that certain nirvana.

### **(Tell me, what kind of delusional fantasy is that?)**

I believe that you do not have to have a multi-gazillion-dollar starched-white-collar career, become caught up in the social lifestyles of the rich and ridiculous, or have all the fame in the world so everyone knows you *just so you can feel acknowledged, wanted, appreciated, and, above all, loved.*

I am of the belief that though they might be great jobs, you do not have to be a mayor of a major metropolis or CEO of a Fortune 500 company in order to take a stand for your convictions; to lead, rally, or educate others for your cause; or to maintain a vision that will pave the way for other generations to come. The *everyday* hardworking folks, God bless 'em, have always and will continue, day in and day out, truly to make an impact on their families, communities, jobs, America, and the world as a whole.

I believe with *extreme* conviction that America and other democracies like Her are places

where anyone is able not only to flourish—no matter which side of the tracks we came from, our past struggles, our heritage or current social ranking—but also to rise above it all and accomplish damn near anything for ourselves and, more importantly, for our children’s children. Our nation is where people of free will who find determination either through adversity or providence can move mountains and make Goliath-like barriers crumble before them. A place where fulfilling either the smallest or the grandest of aspirations is so much more than a mere fantasy, that it is a constant opportunity that becomes a way of life.

Anyway, these are just a few of **my** beliefs.

As you can probably tell, I am fairly passionate about my values, how I conduct myself and how I treat others, but mostly about being optimistic about life in general. I hold myself to a standard. Not for pretence in any form, but for the sole purpose of knowing my capabilities. If I appear to be arrogant or all-knowing, I am neither of those things and I do **not** look kindly on those who go out of their way to behave in that manner.

I pride myself in being hardworking, caring, humble, appreciative, and helpful to others. I am, by my own estimation, the luckiest person in the world, for I know exactly where I came from. *I* have made many mistakes, screwed up really badly, and at times have made the worst of choices. I’ve allowed myself to be compromised, knowing full well I was stupidly, needlessly, exposing myself. I have given away my trust with the best of intentions, whether in business or in my personal life, only to have my gestures seen as absolute signs of weakness. I’ve chased after things hoping to prove myself to those whom I knew looked down on me and probably always would, which only intensified my futile efforts all the more.

I know how it feels when no matter what you do, no matter how much you work and sacrifice, day in and day out, you begin to believe you’re never going to get ahead, that all your time and effort have been in vain. I know that at times responsibility, all that weight you balance on your shoulders, becomes too much to bear, and all you want to do is run away from the world and simply disappear.

I know how it feels to have folks view you as something you’re not. I know how painful it feels not to fit in—to keep your head down, mouth shut, and eyes closed to everyday situations, *living a hollow life*, while all the time there’s another person, the *real* you, deep down inside, dying to speak your piece and burst through to live life on your terms.

I know firsthand what it is like to be nothing and have nothing to the point of being nonexistent. To be teased, unwanted, and beaten down until you have no physical or spiritual strength to open your eyes just to see where the next hit will land.

I know what it’s like to be used, where being degraded is a normal, everyday occurrence; to suffer from low esteem and perform tasks with a limited formal education; to live day by day with a huge feeling of overwhelming guilt from a dark past of long, long ago. I also know about being overly blessed when others around you who’ve experienced far worse,

work harder, and sacrifice all the more are not as fortunate.

And I personally know exactly how it feels to do one's part in helping save the world, while all time feeling disregarded and losing out on love and being loved.

Yet with all I've experienced—the bad, the ugly, and the disgusting, as well as the good, the grand adventures, and the phenomenal heights I've been fortunate enough to obtain—the single element I've taken with me and that I've drawn absolute strength from in **all** aspects of my life is in a word: resolve. To be of the belief that things will get better. That no matter how low, how tough, or how unfair life has been, all of us have the right and indisputable opportunity for greatness. The resolve that *if* we could endure the worst of times, then our mind-set *should* be that we **could** and **should** damn well accomplish anything. That no matter how wretched or hurtful an experience may be, we have to summon the strength to confront it, take charge, and let it go in order to move forward and live a full, rich life. Believe that we can not only achieve our dreams, but also muster the courage to step beyond our comfort zones on a consistent basis, to strive to better our lives and the lives of those around us. Life is more than how much you can acquire with a “look-at-me” drive to charge to the hilt with no concern or responsibility for how to pay for the flashy gotta-have-it-before-anyone-else gas-guzzling SUV, or clothes that you won't wear three months later because they're “out of style,” or a closet full of designer shoes that are so outrageously expensive, one pair of them could feed a family of five for a year.

On the other hand, I think it's most honorable to be content with having a few nice things that you've longed for forever—scrimped, saved, and worked so hard for—but still extend a hand to assist others who are less fortunate, an action that truly enriches our lives. We must each find the capacity and maturity truly to understand and appreciate how fortunate we are to live in a country that is literally the beacon of hope to all mankind throughout the world, while being truly respectful to those who continue to sacrifice on our behalf.

If my convictions seem a little too hard-nosed—or, on the other side, too syrupy sweet—I have sound reasons for being so adamant. Like a lot of folks, I overcame less-than-humble beginnings. As a man on the back-nine of the game called life, the more I look at my childhood for what it was, the more it terrifies me to the core. But like those who've had similar pasts, who have fought and sacrificed in wars, lived and endured through the Depression, survived a life-threatening illness, been screwed over at work, suffered through a painful divorce, lost a loved one, or any other unfortunate situation, I, like tens of million of others, quickly learned to adapt and overcome. Again, moving forward was always my key.

Now, I openly confess that for more than twenty years I've personally done my best in the arena of child-abuse awareness and prevention, as well as assisting and praising legions of others in that courageous field of saving the lives of victims of the worst atrocities. While I take tremendous pride in this work, it does not define me. Yet there are those who have typecast me as the one-dimensional “child-abuse” guy.

In my heart of hearts, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Whether it's overcoming a traumatic experience, battling tumors of the brain, or raising 1.8 kids all by yourself, it takes determination! It takes maintaining a personal conviction—holding the line for *your* values. **That** has been the banner I've been carrying for all these years.

**Resolve** is the message I've fought to convey in every word of every paragraph of every book I have written, books that have been read by millions upon millions of folks. Those same books have succeeded against all odds: fraud, embezzlement, and deliberate sabotage. Those books have also been fortunate enough to have broken publishing records throughout the world.

Moving forward has been the singular theme in *every* presentation I've been fortunate enough to give to thousands of organizations across the globe. In my life, I have been blessed with accolades ranging from commendations from four Presidents of the United States and being selected as the Outstanding Young Person of the World to receiving the National Jefferson Award. However, out of all the so-called accomplishments, my chief focus has always been on being a good father to my son by raising him through example (as all good parents do), while passing on these essential values that I feel are imperative.

Please understand: I mention the above only to further demonstrate my message to you. That's all. As my gracious former wife, Marsha, stated, "Dave doesn't mind applying his fame or kudos to get his foot in the door, but only to further his mission of helping others." I don't do what I do for gold-plated toilet paper or manipulate my so-called status (which is minimal at best) to get the best seat at a high-end overpriced restaurant so I can sit next the newest post-teen, lip-synching pop sensation of the moment. I know individuals who have those intentions, and hey, that's great for them. It's just not my style.

Another way of looking at it is that I'm not some guy who read something from somewhere and went out to become the Master Motivator of Motivation. In one word, I'm **self-made**. Like you and countless others, for good and ill, I lived it. And I'm all the better for it. Without ego, I'm proud. I've done a great deal and, God willing, I'll do a lot more. By the grace of God and a great deal of luck, I've earned my place at the table.

In the following chapters I will help you find something you once lost and/or discover a conviction you didn't realize you always had. No smoke, no mirrors, no mindless mumbo jumbo, just plain common sense real-life, apply-right-now information. Unlike my book *Help Yourself*, which went into great detail about learning how to address personal critical issues, *Moving Forward* is more of a guide in aiding you to know in your heart of hearts that no matter the obstacle, the heartache or setback, you can overcome. That you can take the initiative, set the standard, deal with your past, and realize, that with the good, the grand, and

the repugnant, for nearly everything there is a purpose. But during it all you have to take a stand. You've got to keep your chin up. Believe there are better days ahead. As my dear friend, author and Samaritan extraordinaire Richard Paul Evans (who too took a few hard knocks) once stated, "It is in the darkest skies that the brightest stars are best seen." **You** are that star. You just have to dust yourself off and have the conviction to shine and be seen!

I believe that now, more than ever, we need those who are righteous in their cause. And with your conviction, your trust, I vow to you that I will do all that I can in this cause to assist, educate, and inspire. Every word, every example in this book is for you. No matter how you think, act, or simply get by, at the end of the day when you gaze at your reflection, the reality of your life is about *moving forward*.

As I scribe these words to you, our country, our world, and our way of life has changed dramatically. I believe that now, more than ever, our families, our communities, and our nation needs, expects, and demands real folks to step up to the plate and commit to making a real difference. Whether one's best is sweeping floors for a living, getting the kids ready and off to school, or volunteering once a week at a homeless shelter, in the collective "goodwill of life" it all makes an impact. All of us can make **that** difference.

My job is to help you to help yourself, but for me to do that, right here, right now, *I need your trust*. I need you to do more than simply read this book. I need you to dig a little. To open up to yourself honestly about your life thus far. I also need you to invest some of your time. Now don't panic; it's going to be simple. More than anyone, I understand and appreciate folks who are super-duper busy. But this is important. If it wasn't, you would not be reading this book. Of course you truly desired to make a change, to make things better in order to live a happier, far more productive life.

At this point in your journey, you *so* cannot live life on the sidelines. You can't be a mere observer, hoping, praying for someone to rescue you, to tell you what to say or do or control every aspect of your life.

Appreciate this: You either live life or life lives you. *Moving Forward* will take a little—just a little—interaction on your part. At the end of every chapter I designed a series of questions to help you explore your personal perspective as it specifically relates to that particular section. I hope you become so engaged in the chapters that these questions help prod something that you can apply to improve your life. In reality this shouldn't take more than a couple of minutes, a pen or pencil, and a piece of paper to accomplish.

If you're open and honest with yourself, it will be more than worth it.

Part of the process of the Your Personal Perspective section is for you to see firsthand that when you put something down in black and white, it is much more constructive than a mere thought or two that races through your mind at the speed of light. By putting pen to paper, you are in fact stimulating your cranium as you review events of your life to put certain aspects in a better perspective. It's inescapable. Simply put, writing works.

To further help you along, at the end of each chapter, before the questions, I will reveal pivotal parts of my own life (for good or bad) and how they apply to that section.

Bottom line: As your author I am committed to help you to achieve your greatness!

So in the words of a courageous American, the late Mr. Todd Beamer, "Let's roll."

God bless.

Dave Pelzer