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BACK

JOHN MASON

Bestselling Author of *An Enemy Called Average*

Let Go of Whatever Holds You BACK

JOHN MASON



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To Dave, for his joy that reminds me to have a smile on my face.

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Introduction

Momentum—a great word for a powerful life. I believe without a doubt that God’s will for you is momentum. He wants you to let go of whatever holds you back. His best is for you and me to grow, increase, and be more than what we are today.

I’m a big sports fan. I love basketball, football, golf, and many other sports. (Yes, I even love *watching* golf.) Of course, the word *momentum* is frequently mentioned in nearly every event I watch. Why? Because it’s such a key to a team’s or individual’s success. Those little successes building one upon another lead to the best results. I recently heard a basketball coach on the radio saying, “We’ve got momentum. We’ve won nine games in a row. We expect to win every game we play now. The players are more confident when they shoot and consequently make more shots.”

Here’s why I wrote this book: I want you to win more games and make more shots. As you read this book, I believe you will capture and increase momentum in your life. The Bible says you can be “confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). So let me ask you this question: Is God finished with you yet?

The good news is that you’re not in this all alone. God is with you every step of the way. One of my favorite Scripture verses says it best: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jer. 29:11 NIV)

Be confident and receive God’s momentum for your life.



Looking Inward

A Diamond Is a Hunk of Coal That Stuck to Its Job and Made Good Under Pressure

Growing up in the late 1950s and 1960s, most of my friends and I had a popular toy that was a blow-up figure with a weighted bottom. The figure could be a clown, a cowboy, or some evil character. I had a clown. It was fun to punch. I'd watch it fall over and then spring right back to attention. No matter how hard I punched or what technique I used, this fun toy came back for more. Today this toy teaches me a lesson: we may get knocked over, but the key to bouncing back and not staying down is having the right foundation.

A good prayer to pray when you feel like giving up is, “Lord, give me the determination and tenacity of a weed.” I don’t like weeds, but I have to admire their resolve. A great oak is only a little nut that held its ground. “Somebody is sitting in the shade today because someone long ago planted a tree” (Warren Buffett). “These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won’t last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God’s richest blessing upon us forever and ever” (2 Cor. 4:17 TLB). Most of us take hold of opportunity, but we let go of it too soon.

Many people fail in life because they believe in the adage “If you don’t succeed at one thing right away, try something else.” But success eludes those who follow such advice. The dreams that have come true did so because people stuck to their ambitions. They refused to be discouraged. They never let disappointment get the upper hand. Challenges only spurred them on to greater efforts.

Don B. Owens Jr.

You’ll be judged by what you finish, not by what you start. If you don’t see results right away, don’t worry. God doesn’t pay by the week, He pays at the end.

All great achievements require time and tenacity. “The reward for those who persevere far exceeds the pain that must precede the victory” (Ted Engstrom). It is not success that God rewards but faithfulness in doing His will. Be persevering—it may be the last key on the ring that opens the door. Hanging on one second longer than your competition makes you a winner. Become famous for finishing important, difficult tasks.

If you’re tempted to stop, just think of Brahms. He took seven long years to compose his famous lullaby because he kept falling asleep at the piano—*just kidding!* But it really did take him that long to finish. I agree with Woodrow Wilson when he said, “I would rather fail in a cause that will

ultimately succeed than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.” Nearly all failures result from people quitting too soon. ~~“And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t get discouraged and give up”~~ (Gal. 6:9 TLB). It takes the hammer of persistence to drive the nail of success.

Many of life’s failures were people who didn’t realize how close they were to success when they gave up. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote, “When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, until it seems as though you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the time and place that the tide will turn.” The lowest ebb is the turn of the tide.

You uncover opportunity by applying persistence to possibilities. When you get right down to the root meaning of the word *succeed*, you find it simply means to persevere and follow through. Any diamond will tell you it was just a hunk of coal that stuck to its job and made good under pressure.

The road to success runs uphill, so don’t expect to break any speed records. Impatience is costly. Your greatest mistakes will happen because of impatience. Most people fail simply because they’re impatient and they cannot join the beginning with the end. Keep patiently doing God’s will if you want Him to do for you all He has promised.

The determined soul will do more with a rusty monkey wrench than a loafer will accomplish with all the tools in a mechanic’s shop.

Rupert Hughes

The power to hold on in spite of everything, to endure—this is the winner’s quality. To endure greater than to dare. The difference between the impossible and the possible lies simply in a person’s determination.

When You're Trying to Be Like Someone Else, the Best You Can Ever Be Is Number Two

You and I are born equal but also different. Do you want to stand out in the world? Then be you. Be who you really are. This is the first step toward becoming better than what you are now.

No man could be ideally successful until he has found his place. Like a locomotive, he is strong on the track, but weak anywhere else.

Orison Marden

Choose to become yourself. Avoid following the crowd. Be an engine, not a caboose. “It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation” (Herman Melville). Average people would rather be wrong than different. We relinquish three-fourths of ourselves in order to be like other people. Conformity is the jailer of satisfaction and the enemy of growth. Did you know you're destined to be different? Dare to be different and follow your own star.

“Be yourself. Who else is better qualified?” (Frank Giblin). Ask yourself these two questions: (1) If I try to be like someone else, who will be like me? (2) If I'm not me, who will I be? The more you develop *your* potential, the less you'll become like someone else.

Trying to be like someone else is self-defeating. One of your main purposes in life is to give birth to yourself. As long as you are trying to be like someone else, the best you can ever be is *number two*.

Upon completing a highly dangerous tightrope walk over Niagara Falls in appalling wind and rain, the Great Zumbrati was met by an enthusiastic supporter, who urged him to make a return trip, this time pushing a wheelbarrow, which the spectator had thoughtfully brought along.

The Great Zumbrati was reluctant, given the terrible conditions, but the supporter pressed him. “You can do it—I know you can,” he urged.

“You really believe I can do it?” asked Zumbrati.

“Yes—definitely—you can do it,” the supporter gushed.

“Okay,” said Zumbrati, “get in the wheelbarrow . . .”

What you think you see in another person's life is not reality. You can't reach your destiny by taking another person's road. When you walk only where you see another's tracks, you'll make no new discoveries. “Do not follow where the path may lead—go instead where there's no path and

leave a trail” (unknown). “God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well” (Rom. 12:6 TLB).

“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed” (Rom. 12:2 Phillips). “The more you are like yourself, the less you are like anyone else” (Walt Disney). You’re like a tree; you must put forth the fruit created in you.

Don’t be common. The common goes nowhere. You must be uncommon to be a champion. Your responsibility is not to *remake* yourself but to *make* the absolute best of what God made. Don’t compromise yourself . . . it’s all you’ve got. “Almost every man wastes part of his life in attempts to display qualities he does not possess” (Samuel Johnson). Don’t let your life be a continual struggle to be what you are not and to do what you’re not supposed to do.

You’re an unprecedented miracle. You’re as God made you, and since He’s satisfied, you should be too.

People Say They Want Riches When What They Need Is Fulfillment of a Purpose

The world makes room for a person of purpose. Her words and actions demonstrate she *knows* where she's going. You're built to conquer circumstances, solve problems, and attain goals. You'll find no real satisfaction or happiness in life without obstacles to conquer, goals to achieve, and a purpose to accomplish. People may say they want money; what they really need is satisfaction. Happiness comes when you squander yourself for a purpose.

In your heart is a sleeping lion. No person alive can completely shun his or her destiny. Be on a mission. Have a definite sense of direction and purpose for your life. Successful lives are motivated by dynamic purpose. God can only bless your plan and direct you in accomplishing it if you have one. Strong convictions precede great actions.

As soon as you resign yourself to fate, your resignation is promptly accepted. You don't have a fate, you have a destiny. When you look into the future, it's so bright it will make you squint. "It's never too late to be what you might have been" (George Eliot).

"More men fail through lack of purpose than lack of talent" (Billy Sunday). If your method is hit or miss, you'll usually miss. "If you're not sure where you are going, you'll probably end up someplace else" (Robert F. Mager). Too many people don't know where they're going, but they're on their way. Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell. Go forward with purpose.

The only thing some people do is grow older.

Ed Howe

Lord Chesterfield wrote, "Firmness of purpose is one of the most necessary sinews of character and one of the best instruments of success. Without it, genius wastes its efforts in a maze of inconsistencies." The man who has no direction is the slave of his circumstances. The poorest man is not he who is without a cent but he who is without a purpose. There's good news for each of us in walking out our purpose. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30).

"If you don't have a vision for your life, then you probably haven't focused in on anything" (Dr. David Burns). In the absence of vision there can be no clear and constant focus. When your purpose is clear, decisions become more obvious. "When you discover your mission, you will feel

its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work on it” (W. Clement Stone).

Don't Live Within Your Means

It doesn't happen often, but while I was writing this book, I believe the Lord awakened me in the middle of the night. I felt Him leading me to write a nugget titled "Don't Live Within Your Means." Even though it was 4:50 a.m., I was so excited that I woke my wife and began to "preach" to her about it for several minutes. (She said the idea was great, but she really needed her sleep!)

What do I believe God meant by this? I believe He wants us to act bigger, believe larger, associate higher, and (with God's help) do more than we can ask or think. Your outlook determines your outcome. If God is your partner . . . make your plans BIG.

I'm not encouraging you to go wild, to have no boundaries, or to be reckless. Certainly we should spend within our means—but not *live* there. Talk with people smarter than you. Listen to those more spiritual than you. Ask questions of those more successful than you. Lend a hand to those less fortunate than you. Don't stay where you are.

I sincerely believe many people who think they're frugal aren't really frugal. Rather, they're full of fear. The label of frugality, balance, or conservativeness is often a mask to cover up a person's deep-rooted fear. Don't make such thorough plans for rainy days that you don't enjoy today's sunshine.

When you live only within your means, you can't live by faith. If you aren't living by faith, you can't please God, for "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6). Abandon altogether the search for security. "Only the insecure strive for security" (Wayne Dyer). If you're just trying to earn a living, you'll forget how to live.

I've heard this saying most of my life: "Whom God calls, He equips. Whom He equips, He anoints to do the job." No matter what level of your ability, God has equipped you with more potential than you can possibly use in your lifetime. Don't let the future be a time when you wish you'd done what you aren't doing now.

If the shoe fits . . . don't wear it. If you do, you're not allowing room for growth. Webster knew all about the ineffectiveness of "living within your means." When you look up the word *means* in his dictionary, it tells you to see the word *average*. So when you decide to live within your means, you're deciding to live an average life.

If You're Not Failing, You're Not Growing

An inspirational speaker began his seminar by holding up a twenty-dollar bill. He asked the two hundred people in the room, “Who would like this twenty-dollar bill?”

Hands started going up.

“I am going to give this twenty dollars to one of you,” he said. “But first, let me do this,” and he proceeded to crumple the bill.

He then asked, “Who still wants it?”

Still the hands were in the air.

“Well,” he continued, “what if I do this?” And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe.

He picked it up, now all crumpled and dirty. “Now who still wants it?” Still the hands went into the air.

“My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth twenty dollars.”

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value.

We all make mistakes—especially those who do things. Failure is often the first necessary step toward success. If we don't take the risk of failing, we won't get the chance to succeed. When we're trying, we're winning. To fail is the natural consequence of trying. Babe Ruth, one of the great homerun hitters but also the all-time strikeout leader, always said, “Never let the fear of striking out get in your way.”

Stop trying to be perfect. When you have a serious decision to make, tell yourself firmly you are going to make it. Don't expect it will be a perfect one. I love the wisdom of Winston Churchill: “The maxim ‘nothing avails but perfection’ may be spelled P-A-R-A-L-Y-S-I-S.” The pursuit of excellence is gratifying and healthy; the pursuit of perfection is frustrating, neurotic, and a terrible waste of time.

I don't like these cold, precise, perfect people who, in order not to speak wrong, never speak at all, and in order not to do wrong, never do anything.

Henry Ward Beecher

The fact is, you're like a tea bag. You won't know your own strength until you've been through some hot water. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing. "Remember, there are two benefits of failure. First, if you do fail, you learn what doesn't work; and second, the failure gives you an opportunity to try a new approach" (Roger Von Oech).

Some defeats are only installments to victory. "Even a mistake may turn out to be the one thing necessary to a worthwhile achievement" (Henry Ford). Some people learn from their mistakes; some never recover from them. Learn how to fail intelligently. Develop success from failure.

Mistakes and failure are two of the surest stepping-stones to success. No other element can do so much for a person who is willing to study them and to make the most out of them. "Most people think of success and failure as opposites, but they are actually both products of the same process" (Roger Von Oech). Your season of failure is the best time for sowing your seeds of success.

Successful people are not afraid to fail. They go from failure to failure . . . until at last success is theirs. The best way to accelerate your success is to double your failure rate. The law of failure is one of the most powerful of all success laws.

No matter what mistakes you have made—no matter how you've messed things up—you can still make a new beginning. The person who fully realizes this suffers less from the shock and pain of failure and sooner gets off to a new beginning.

Norman Vincent Peale

"When you stumble today, pick yourself up tomorrow. That's what tomorrows are for" (Janet Collins). Often just before the big success . . . comes apparent failure and discouragement. "I hope someday to have so much of what the world calls success, that people will ask me, 'What's your secret?' And I will tell them, 'I just get up again when I fall down'" (Paul Harvey).

The greatest mistake you can make in life is to continually fear you will make one. "Don't be afraid to fail. Don't waste energy trying to cover up failure. If you're not failing, you're not growing" (H. Stanley Judd). When successful people stop growing and learning, it's usually because they have become less and less willing to risk failure. "Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead-end street" (William A. Ward).

If you are made of the right stuff, a hard fall results in a sky-high bounce. A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable but also more useful than a life spent doing nothing.

Constantly Frustrate Tradition with Your Creativity and Imagination

A small boy is sent to bed by his father. Five minutes later: “Da-ad . . .”

“What?”

“I’m thirsty. Can you bring me a drink of water?”

“No. You had your chance. Lights out.”

Five minutes later: “Da-aaaad . . .”

“WHAT?”

“I’m THIRSTY. Can I have a drink of water?”

“I told you NO! If you ask again, I’ll have to spank you!”

Five minutes later: “Daaaa-aaaad . . .”

“WHAT!”

“When you come in to spank me, can you bring a drink of water?”

It’s fun to continually frustrate tradition with your creativity and imagination. “The opportunities of man are limited only by his imagination. But so few have imagination that there are ten thousand fiddlers to one composer” (Charles Kettering).

Your dreams are a preview to your greatness. All people who have achieved great things have been dreamers. Those who do most, dream most. A shallow thinker seldom makes a deep impression. We act, or fail to act, not because of *determination*, as is so commonly believed, but because of *imagination*. Only a person who sees the invisible can do the impossible.

Someone once said, “Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen.” You’ll get more out of every part of your life if you stay incurably curious. “The important thing is to not stop questioning. Never lose a holy curiosity” (Albert Einstein). Dexter Yager says, “Don’t let anybody steal your dream.”

God gave us a world unfinished so we might share in the joy and satisfaction of creation. “Creativity has been built into every one of us; it’s part of our design. Each of us lives less of the life God intended for us when we choose not to live out the creative powers we possess” (Ted Engstrom).

I’m a big fan of dreams. Unfortunately, dreams are the first casualty in life—people seem to give them up quicker than anything for a “reality.”

Kevin Costner

Realistic people with practical aims are rarely as realistic or practical in the long-run of life as the dreamers who pursue their

Stop and daydream once in a while. You need to let your imagination roam and give it a chance to breathe. It's never too late for you to start thinking more creatively. Often it's just a lack of imagination that keeps you from your potential. Thinking of new ideas is like shaving: if you don't do it every day, you're a bum. Have a constant flow of new, exciting, powerful ideas on which you act immediately.

What you need is an idea. Be brave enough to live creatively.

Get Ahead During the Time Others Waste

Don't be a person who says, "Ready. Aim . . . aim . . . aim . . . aim . . ." As fast as each opportunity presents itself, use it! No matter how small an opportunity may be, use it! Do the thing you have to do when it ought to be done whether you like it or not. "He who hesitates misses the green light, gets bumped in the rear, and loses his parking space" (Herbert Prochnow).

One of the deceptions of an unproductive life is that this present day is not important. Every day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons, tear into the wrapping, and open them up. Write it on your heart: *every day is the best day of the year*. "This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24 NRSV).

By the time the fool has learned to play the game, the players have dispersed and the rules have changed. Don't find yourself striking when the iron is cold. Instead, scratch opportunity where it itches. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you" (John 12:35). Life is made of constant calls to action.

"Successful leaders have the courage to take action while others hesitate" (John Maxwell). You never know what you can do until you try. Remember, the moment you say, "I give up," someone else is seeing the same situation and saying, "My, what a great opportunity." The fact is that no opportunity is ever lost; someone else just picks up the ones you missed. A secret of success in life is to be ready for opportunity when it comes. Ability is nothing without opportunity.

Time flies. It's up to you to be the pilot. "Everything comes to him who hustles while he waits" (Thomas Edison). It's been my observation that most successful people get ahead during the time others waste. A secret of success is to do something else in the meantime. Make quick use of the moment.

It is later than you think. Be ready now. God's alarm clock has no snooze button. It doesn't do any good to stand up and take notice if you sit down as soon as opportunity passes by. Look at it . . . size it up . . . make a decision. You postpone your life when you can't make up your mind. "If you wait for perfect conditions you will never get anything done. . . . Keep on sowing your seed, for you never know which will grow—perhaps it all will" (Eccles. 11:4, 6 TLB).

William Ward has this recipe for success: "Study while others are sleeping; work while others are loafing; prepare while others are playing; and dream while others are wishing." There is no time like the present and no present like time. Those who take advantage of their advantage get the

advantage in this world. Don't find yourself at the end of your life saying, "What a wonderful life I've had! I only wish I had realized and appreciated it sooner."

Get Out of the Middle of the Road

Your destiny is not a matter of chance; it's a matter of choice. Many people have the right aims in life—they just never get around to pulling the trigger. When you determine what you want, you have made the most important decision in your life. You have to know what you want in order to attain it.

“Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it” (Ps. 37:5 NASB). If we are faithful, God will take care of our successes. Peace is the result of a deliberate decision, an adjustment of your life to the will of God. Guidance means I can count on God. Commitment means God can count on me.

“Not to decide is to decide” (Harvey Cox). Weeds grow lushly in the soil of indecision. Get out of the middle of the road. Standing in the middle of the road is very dangerous; you can get knocked down by traffic going both directions. The train of failure usually runs on the track of indecision. Because of indecision, one can die before one is actually dead.

Indecision is debilitating; it feeds upon itself; it is, one might say, habit forming. Not only that, but it is contagious; it transmits itself to others.

H. A. Hopf

“There is a fine difference of perspective between getting involved and being committed. In ham and eggs, the chicken is involved, but the pig is committed” (John Alan Price). Until you're committed, there's hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. “I will” is a slogan for an exciting, productive life.

You must choose between boredom and decisions. Don't be like a wheelbarrow—going no farther than others push you. The weak are always forced to decide between alternatives others have set before them and they have not chosen themselves. “Never complain about what you permit” (Mike Murdock).

You're where you are today because you've chosen to be there. Reality forms around a commitment, and one person with commitment always accomplishes more than a hundred people with mere interest. Commitment is what transforms an idea into a reality.

Be decisive, even if it means you'll sometimes be wrong. The key to your future is that you can still choose. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). What you commit yourself to be will change you from what you are into what you can be.

What You See Depends Mainly on What You Look For

The reason many people don't get answers from God is the same reason a thief doesn't find a policeman: they are running away. How we position ourselves in life makes all the difference. To one person the world is desolate, dull, and empty. To another the same world looks rich, interesting, and full of meaning. The choice is up to you. It's like how a twenty-dollar bill looks so big when it goes to church and so little when it goes out for groceries.

If you look at life the wrong way, there's always cause for alarm. Most people complain because roses have thorns. Instead, be thankful thorns have roses. What you see depends mainly on what you look for.

A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom. Knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted.

As graduation day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son and how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautifully wrapped gift box. Curious but somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible. Angrily, he raised his voice at his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the holy book.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and a wonderful family. But he realized his father was now very old and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. Before he could make arrangements, the man received a telegram telling him his father had passed away and willed all of his possessions to him. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart.

He began to search his father's important papers and saw the still-new Bible, just as he had left years ago. Through tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. As he read those words, a car key dropped from an envelope taped behind the Bible. It had a tag with a dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation and the words . . . PAID IN FULL.

How many times do we miss God's blessings because they are not packaged as we expected?

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