

INCREASING YOUR CAPACITY
TO EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE

UNLIMITING

GOD

A silhouette of a person walking up a large sand dune under a bright, golden sun with rays breaking through the clouds.

RICHARD BLACKABY

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MULTNOMAH
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UNLIMITING GOD

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*To my father, Henry Blackaby,
the greatest man of God I have ever known.*

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction: The Problem Is Never with God</i>	1
<i>One: Exceeding the Limits</i>	7
<i>Two: Unlimiting What We Hear from God</i>	24
<i>Three: Unlimiting God's Work Through Us</i>	48
<i>Four: Unlimiting What We Know of God</i>	77
<i>Five: Unlimiting God's Power in Our Lives</i>	104
<i>Six: Unlimiting God's Joy in Our Lives</i>	127
<i>Seven: Overcoming Our Spiritual Limits</i>	147
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	179
<i>Notes</i>	181



INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM IS NEVER WITH GOD

For the past several years, our family has spent the last weekend in August at my brother-in-law Jim's home in Taber, Alberta, Canada. Taber is famous for its bumper crop of succulent corn. Every year the small town hosts Cornfest to celebrate the harvest. The festivities include a carnival, outdoor concerts, a craft fair, and fireworks, plus 5k and 10k runs.

Five years ago my daughter Carrie decided she wanted to join the rest of the family on the run. Carrie is a marvelous ice skater, but she'd never participated in a formal footrace before. I decided the fatherly thing to do was to let her run with me. In my younger days, my keen competitive instincts would have steered me clear of any impediment that might hinder my chances at a medal. But after undergoing decades of God's teaching me life's true priorities, having gained much wisdom in my middle age, and having put on fifty pounds since my university days, I decided to forgo any chance of finishing near the top. I offered to run with my little daughter.

Carrie, knowing her dad's competitive nature, demanded assurance that I wouldn't abandon her in the heat of the race. I promised her I was running only for enjoyment and it would be great fun to accompany her—regardless of where we placed. In fact, I said, anytime she wanted to stop running and start walking to catch her breath, I'd happily comply.

The starting gun fired. My wife and two sons were among the “keeners” at the front of the pack, and they quickly disappeared from sight around the first bend.

As my daughter and I loped along at an easy pace on that beautiful morning, I joked with her and encouraged her.

After only two blocks, Carrie wanted to slow to a walk. It seemed a little early for our first rest break, but I told her that was fine by me. Dozens of young people whizzed past us as we leisurely walked along enjoying the morning air.

After a few minutes I asked Carrie if she was ready to try running again. She was. But after only a few more blocks, she asked to walk

*That was too much.
“I will NOT lose to
THEM!” I wheezed.*

again. No problem. Young adults were streaming by. Then middle-aged people began passing us. Some older women were overtaking us at a brisk walk.

I exhorted my weary daughter to dig a little deeper so we could push forward. We ran, but soon she was complaining that her side hurt. I reluctantly agreed to walk again. In this pattern, our “race” continued.

Then it happened. I heard them coming. I was surprised anyone was still behind us, but sure enough, a middle-aged woman pushing her elderly mother *in a wheelchair* serenely glided past, leaving us to eat their dust.

That was too much. “I will NOT lose to THEM!” I wheezed. “I’ve got my limits!”

We staggered off at a trot. I could just make out the finish line on the horizon. My legs were aching. My breath was coming in short, painful gasps. But we were slowly gaining on the wheelchair.

Then Carrie, too, noticed the crowds cheering and waving at the finish line in the distance. Suddenly she underwent a metamorphosis. The hesitant little girl I'd been tenderly coaxing throughout the race immediately found her second wind. She accelerated rapidly. The lights had come on. She was possessed.

Carrie torpedoed past the wheelchair, her eye on the prize.

I tried to keep up, but there were only fumes left in my tank. I made a heroic last effort, barely edging out the octogenarian and her daughter before crossing the tape.

Carrie waited for me at the finish line with a water bottle and a handful of fruit. She wasn't even winded.

Later that day, we were met with a huge surprise. At the awards ceremony, Carrie received a beautiful first-place medal for her age category. (They handed out oxygen masks for mine.) I'm so glad Carrie grew dissatisfied with her performance, even though she had no idea a prize was waiting for her just around the corner.

Carrie has since won another medal, and as I write this, she's training for a 10k race coming up soon.

What's my point? My daughter always had the ability to be a medal-winning runner, but she'd set the limit for herself far below her capacity. She might have been satisfied to remain there too, had I not finally urged her to push on to another level.

The Bible describes the Christian life as a race (1 Corinthians 9:24–27; Philippians 3:12–14; 2 Timothy 4:7). This Christian race is one in which every participant has an equal opportunity to be spectacularly successful. It all depends on how much the person wants to succeed.

The apostle Paul claimed he ran life's race to win the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24). Unfortunately, many Christians set their sights far too

low. They're satisfied to plod along in dreary, unrewarding spirituality, unwilling to pay the price for greater spiritual accomplishments. They may be comfortable, but they're not experiencing nearly as much as they could. They've inadvertently chosen to limit their experience of God.

Here's another picture. God invites His people to a richer experience: "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3). Almighty, infinite, all-knowing God welcomes people to come to Him and to allow Him to reveal things from His heart and mind that would amaze them. Yet when was the last time you learned something brand-new from God that was "great and mighty"? Many Christians today receive this enormous invitation, and yet we rarely experience a fresh, dynamic encounter with God. It's not that the Lord isn't willing to reveal more exciting truths to us; we limit our own capacity to receive more from Him.

The problem is never with God. The obstacle is us. We're far too easily satisfied. We limit God in our lives.

God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20). Have you seen Him do things in and through your life that absolutely amaze you in their magnitude? If you haven't, why is that? After all, the Bible says God wants you to experience this.

Again, the impediment is not God. The problem lies with us. We've become too easily satisfied with spiritual mediocrity. Some of us have become so used to a powerless life that we've come to think of it as normal for the Christian. It is not. God has more for us to experience and to do than we could imagine. We limit God's activity by our own choices.

This book is for those whose spiritual lives suffer from self-imposed limits. Does that describe you? Have you grown complacent in your

walk with God? Do you assume you've already reached the pinnacle of what you're going to experience in your Christian life? Wouldn't you rather grow stronger in your faith, enjoy new victories, and reach higher levels in your walk with God?

Whatever unnecessary limits you've accepted in your spiritual life, my prayer is that you'll determine to break through the barriers that keep you from reaching an entirely new level in your relationship with God. It's time to unlimit God in our lives and to invite Him to do what He longs to do in and through us—knowing that He's prepared to respond to whatever it is we seek from Him.

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I've had the tremendous privilege of traveling around the world and seeing God's kingdom expanding on six continents. I've met incredible Christians and been in dynamic churches that are experiencing God working through them in amazing ways. But I've also sensed the spiritual lostness among teeming multitudes in Asia, in massive townships in Africa, in isolated villages on the Amazon, and among affluent, spiritually indifferent crowds of businesspeople in downtown districts of the world's major cities. Clearly, despite all the modern church is doing to extend God's kingdom, it's not enough. We're losing ground. The number of unbelievers worldwide is growing faster than the numbers of believers.

I've worshiped with fellow Christians from around the world as we praised God for His mighty power. Yet God's power seems to be in short supply in many churches today. Countless congregations are divided, many others have reached a plateau or begun a steady decline—yet they sing every Sunday of God's awesome strength.

Clearly the status quo of modern Christianity is inadequate. More of the same won't bring us any closer to God's rule on earth. As Christians today we must reach an entirely new plane in our walk with God. Churches must believe and serve their Lord at a higher level than they've experienced so far. There's too much at stake for Christians and churches to keep doing business as usual.

God is looking for people who are willing to pay the price to obtain a qualitatively different walk with Him. Will you be one of those people? Are you prepared to unlimit God in your life so you can experience Him the way He has always wanted you to?

EXCEEDING THE LIMITS

People have their limits. Some choose to ignore them.

On May 4, 2006, I sat in the East Room of the White House next to my wife, Lisa. Gathered in that ornate room were my four siblings and their spouses, along with my parents, various White House officials and government leaders, and President George W. Bush. My father, honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer, stood on the small dais at the center of the room and offered a prayer for the nation.

As he concluded and prepared to descend the platform, President Bush began to ascend the steps to the podium. Before the distinguished group of dignitaries, he smiled warmly and shook my father's hand. I captured a picture of that moment, and I have it framed in my office. It isn't often someone watches his father shake hands and exchange greetings with the president of the United States. That same day, President Bush informed my father that every morning he reads *Experiencing God Day by Day*, a devotional book my father and I wrote.

As I was enjoying that special occasion, I had a bizarre thought. It occurred to me that my father is one of the most ordinary people I know. I mused, *What if the White House discovers that this man they're treating with such respect is actually, in fact, an ordinary person? Would Secret Service agents roughly show him (and his ordinary family) to the door?*

OUT OF THE ORDINARY

Let me hasten to say my dad is the godliest man I know. I've had the privilege of meeting several famous Christian leaders whom I greatly admire, but my father is hands down the greatest man of God I've known. All the same, he's a very ordinary person.

Henry Thomas Blackaby was born in Williams Lake, British Columbia, Canada. (He likes to add, "Not in the lake, but in the town.") His father and my grandfather, Gerald Richard Blackaby, was the branch manager of the Bank of Montreal and a fascinating man. He had strong convictions and didn't worry if they made him unpopular. At the outset of World War I, the bank's executive management feared the bank would lose its best staff to the military. So they warned employees that those who left the bank to enlist would not have their positions held for them during the war. My grandfather immediately enlisted in the army anyway. He fought in many of the major battles and was wounded in a mustard-gas attack. When he returned to work at war's end, he was placed in the managerial doghouse and consigned to the worst postings.

Soon after my father's birth, my grandfather was transferred to Prince Rupert, a town located on Canada's west coast, close to the Alaska border. It was even more isolated from civilization than Williams Lake. The Prince Rupert area came as close as anything to Canada's Wild West. It was surrounded by mines from which miners descended on the town every weekend seeking fun (and/or trouble). It was a port city as well as a railroad hub, so sailors and railway workers looking for mischief populated the streets. There were also several First Nations tribes in that area that regularly experienced conflict

with the townspeople. When all those forces convened in that isolated place, trouble was inevitable.

That was where my father grew up. It wasn't necessarily a nursery for greatness.

When the family first arrived in Prince Rupert, my granddad immediately began looking for a church home. Not finding one that he believed was true to the Scriptures, he promptly started his own. With his own funds he rented a dance hall, and each Sunday morning, on the sidewalk outside the hall, he put a small clapboard sign he'd constructed that read, "Christ: Crucified, Crowned, Coming."

For eight months the only congregants were my grandparents, my father, and his two brothers. Their first visitor was a man whose life had been ravaged by alcohol. He was intending to commit suicide when he stumbled across this tiny church and was gloriously converted.

In this humble church environment, my father learned about God and began his Christian walk. Ultimately that meager congregation grew to become the largest evangelical church in the area.

Two years ago, I took my son Mike with me when I traveled to the Middle East to speak in a church. At the close of my sermon, a couple eagerly approached

*It wasn't necessarily
a nursery for greatness.*

me and introduced themselves. They told us, "We became Christians in the church your grandfather started in Prince Rupert." Amazing. Seventy years after my grandfather began that church, his grandson and great-grandson were meeting people in the Middle East who were still grateful for his faithfulness.

How did this upbringing affect my father? He certainly learned to hold fast to his convictions. He also grew to be an extremely shy young

man. In fact, he was so soft-spoken that when he preached his first sermon, people sitting more than three rows from the front could barely hear a word he said. Today my father is a powerful preacher, but I wouldn't describe him as an unusually gifted orator. Nor is he an outstanding administrator. And no one has ever accused him of being cutting edge in his ministry techniques.

As I said, he's extremely ordinary.

Yet here he was, an introverted Canadian from an isolated northern town, in the White House shaking hands with the president. That same month he was invited to speak to a gathering of forty ambassadors at the United Nations. He regularly counsels and mentors 165 Christian CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. He has preached in 112 countries and continues to be a popular speaker and writer. His book *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing His Will* has been translated into more than seventy languages and has sold millions of copies.

One cannot escape the obvious conclusion: here's a man who allowed God to overcome his natural limitations and to make him a person of great spiritual influence.

PEOPLE WHO ROSE ABOVE THEIR LIMITATIONS

I love to read biographies. It fascinates me to study the lives of people who had a dramatic impact on the world for Christ. Almost without exception, they were ordinary men and women whom God enabled to overcome their limiting factors so they could achieve great things for His kingdom.

One of my favorite historical characters is Dwight L. Moody. He was an uneducated layman. In fact, his grammar was so poor that his fellow church members asked him to refrain from speaking at church meet-

ings because it was so painful to listen to him. When he sought admission into church membership, he failed a simple test measuring rudimentary Bible knowledge. He volunteered to teach Sunday school, but his church wouldn't trust him with an existing class. He had to begin a new one and enlist his own students. Despite his numerous and obvious limitations, he became the greatest evangelist of his day, encouraging thousands of people to serve in Christian ministry and missions.

Charles Spurgeon had no formal ministerial training, yet he became such a popular preacher in London that people had to obtain a ticket to gain access to his Sunday services.

Fanny Crosby went blind as a baby as the result of a dangerous medical treatment from someone impersonating a doctor. Her father died soon after. Yet Crosby would eventually write over nine thousand hymns, many of them cherished favorites. She became personally acquainted with most of the American presidents who served during her lifetime.

Duncan Campbell, a Presbyterian pastor in Scotland, spent seventeen years in mundane parish ministry. One day he grew so dissatisfied with the meager fruit of his labors he cried out for God's anointing on his life. Henceforth Campbell became God's mighty catalyst for revival wherever he went.

They were ordinary men and women whom God enabled to overcome their limiting factors.

Jonathan Goforth was a Canadian Presbyterian missionary to China. He wrote this about his early ministry: "I began to experience a growing dissatisfaction with the results of my work. In the early pioneer years I had buoyed myself with the assurance that a seed time must always precede a harvest, and had, therefore, been content to persist in the apparently futile struggle. But now thirteen years had passed, and

the harvest seemed, if anything, farther away than ever.”¹ It was only after Goforth became totally discontented with the results of his life and ministry that God did a powerful transforming work in him. God then used him mightily during the Shantung Revival, through which large numbers of Chinese people experienced salvation and revival.

The first time young Billy Graham preached, he was so intimidated that he nervously delivered his entire repertoire of four sermons in eight minutes. Despite this unspectacular beginning, he surrendered his life entirely to his Lord’s service and went on to preach to more people than anyone else in history.

IN OUR DAY AS WELL

The same dramatic breakthroughs are happening today. God continues to enable ordinary believers to overcome their limiting factors. It’s been my privilege to meet many of these dynamic Christians all around the world, and their stories are as diverse as they are amazing.

There’s the blind pastor I met in Africa who was invited by a woman to start a church in her community. The man and his wife responded, and despite his physical limitations, that church grew and flourished. The Sunday I was there, four overcrowded services held more than fifteen hundred people.

What sets them apart?

A woman in the United States has a heart for orphans in Asia, and God has used her to develop an extensive ministry to them.

A retired businessman was reluctant to squander his leisure years, so he started two companies for the purpose of investing the profits into the kingdom of God. Both ventures have prospered.

I know an entrepreneur in Manila who had a passion for reaching businesspeople in the Philippines. He left his lucrative career and is now the pastor of one of the largest churches in Manila.

A former alcoholic in Brazil is now a church planter. God is leading him to start churches along a stretch of the Amazon River with almost ninety villages. When he took me with him to visit the site of his latest church plant, he shared that he'd begun works in fifty-seven of those villages and was aggressively working to reach the rest.

A young executive of a major financial-services corporation leads his company to give half its profits to Christian ministries.

A group of businessmen felt burdened for the men of their city, so they began an interdenominational men's ministry that is impacting thousands of men today.

A doctor in Malaysia left his medical practice to minister to people's souls and is now the pastor of one of the most dynamic churches in that country.

These are people I've met in the last two years. They're all ordinary men and women who've asked God to overcome the limits in their lives so they can make an impact for His kingdom. Most aren't endowed with extraordinary giftedness. In fact, they will all testify to some extreme limitations.

So what sets them apart?

- They have a profound personal intimacy with God.
- They're experiencing God's power in their lives in biblical proportions.
- God is using them to accomplish far more for His kingdom than they dreamed was possible.
- They're experiencing the joy of the Lord to an unusual degree.

COMPELLING QUESTIONS

I've lived my entire life around Christians who had a profound walk with God. God has also worked mightily through many of my family members and close friends. This wonderful heritage has led me to ask several compelling questions:

- If God is truly all powerful, why doesn't He manifest His awesome strength more often through more of His people?
- With millions of Christians around the world worshiping and praying each week, why isn't God's power evident in more congregations? Furthermore, why are so many churches struggling and dying?
- If God wants to reach the millions of people around the world who do not know Him, why doesn't He perform greater miracles through Christians who are serving Him?
- Why do so many Christians find it boring to spend time with God in prayer, Bible study, and worship?
- Since God is limitless, why do so many Christians know Him only on a surface level?
- God can do anything—so why are so many Christians defeated and discouraged?
- Considering God's numerous promises, why are there so many joyless Christians?

I know I'm not the only one who wonders these things. I read the Bible and see how wondrous God is. I list His incredible promises. Yet I encounter hundreds of Christians whose lives are one prolonged struggle.

Living in a minister's home my whole life has brought me up close to the worst that Christians experience. I've received crisis phone calls.

I've watched Christians drop out of church. I've witnessed ugly divorces and painful family rifts. I've known Christians who ended their own lives. These things are bewildering when you know God promises in His Word that His people can experience perpetual victory and irrepressible joy.

Equally perplexing is seeing scores of believers make great plans for serving God and extending His kingdom, yet nothing ever comes of those dreams. Despite their talk about having heard from God and having a vision for what they want to do on God's behalf, their lives seem to make little lasting difference for God's kingdom.

Numerous longtime believers continue to struggle with the same carnal and selfish habits, never experiencing victory and moving on. Joyless Christians, stubborn, unforgiving Christians, bitter Christians who claim they believe in God's power but who never experience it—you know them. Perhaps you're one of them.

Countless Christians rarely experience the depths of God's presence and promises.

In moments of candor, many believers confess that even after years of walking with Christ, they still struggle to take time to pray and to read their Bible. Even pastors, who are paid to be spiritual, regularly admit spending woefully inadequate time in prayer. Countless numbers of Christians are living their lives on the surface of what God intended for them, and they rarely experience the depths of God's presence and promises.

Then I encounter people like my father and the other men and women I've mentioned, and I realize some people *are* receiving the magnificent blessings God promised. They *are* enjoying God's presence; they *are* experiencing His power. Their lives overflow with unshakable

joy. Knowing these people and witnessing their close walk with God, I wonder why so many others are satisfied with mundane, lifeless, powerless Christianity. Why don't more Christians strive to experience every truth God has pledged to them in His Word?

WE LIMIT GOD

God is the One who initiates a relationship with us, and His Holy Spirit facilitates our spiritual growth. God—limitless in His love, power, and wisdom—wants to enter into a love relationship with each of us. He's willing and eager to share His heart and thoughts with us.

We looked earlier at this astounding invitation from God: "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3). Consider also this invitation, equally astounding: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). And this one from the Lord Jesus: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

God is infinite. He can do and have whatever He wants. Yet, incredibly, He desires fellowship with finite, flawed human beings. The magnitude of His character greatly exceeds anything we can possibly comprehend. Moreover, although He has myriads of angels and heavenly creatures eager to immediately do His bidding, God still chooses to work through people. It's unfathomable. Why would God want a relationship with sinful, limited, self-centered people like us?

After many years of walking with God and seeking to go deeper with Him, I've drawn this conclusion: *We* limit God. *We* determine much of what we experience of God's power. And *we* set parameters on the depth of our relationship with God. In spite of limitless possibilities,

we choose to impede what God does in our lives, so that He must say to us, “I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer” (Jeremiah 7:13).

The following actions and words of Jesus merit careful attention, as they reveal certain common themes related to these limitations:

When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” (Matthew 8:10)

But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. (Matthew 8:26)

Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” (Matthew 9:29)

Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:58)

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31)

“And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (Matthew 21:22)

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid; only believe.” (Mark 5:36)

Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:23–24)

But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

(Mark 10:27)

“For with God nothing will be impossible.” (Luke 1:37)

Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” (Luke 7:50)

But He said to them, “Where is your faith?” And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, “Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!” (Luke 8:25)

And He said to her, “Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” (Luke 8:48)

And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17:19)

But He said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” (Luke 18:27)

*We don't have to allow
our limitations to hold us
back from experiencing
what God has for us.*

One recurring theme that jumps out from these passages is that *all* things are possible with God. Another is that people face numerous humanly impossible situations both personal and circumstantial. And another: our *faith* determines whether God will free us from our limitations.

We don't have to allow our limitations to hold us back from experiencing what God has for us. The choice is ours.

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

A disclaimer is in order here: I'm not promoting a "name it and claim it" theology. Nor is this a "health and wealth" guidebook. I do not see faith as a tool we use to get God to give us what we want.

However, I continue to meet many people who settle for mediocrity in their Christian walk. Conversely, I regularly encounter others whose vibrant spiritual life is enviable. We all serve the same God. We know He desires intimate fellowship with us. We know He wants us to experience Him in His awesome splendor. But some people allow complacency to limit their walk with Him.

If you're satisfied with your current spiritual situation, you're setting the boundaries of what you'll experience of Him. If you believe you're incapable of knowing God more intimately or of serving Him more powerfully, you're choosing to plateau spiritually.

*Do you want things happening
in your life that can be explained
only as God's doing?*

But if you sense within your soul that you've barely scratched the surface of what God has for you, if you long to go deeper with God, if you want God to use you to make a significant impact on your world, then keep reading.

Let me clarify what I mean. When I talk about God using people to make a "significant impact," I'm not necessarily referring to someone who's invited to preach a crusade in a football stadium or to address the United Nations. *Anything* God asks you to do is significant. (That's the only kind of work He does!)

What I'm asking is twofold:

First, do you want things to be happening in your life that can be explained *only* as God's doing?

Second, if God *is* doing amazing things in your life, do you want Him to do more?

Consider John Hyde's example. As a missionary in India, he asked God to bring one person to faith in Christ through his testimony *every day* for a year. God chose to answer this prayer, and Hyde daily rejoiced to see people come to Christ. Most of us would be delighted if this were our experience each year. But Hyde knew even this did not in any way exhaust what almighty God was capable of doing through the life of one of His servants. So the following year Hyde asked God for two converts per day. Once again God gave him what he asked for. Eventually Hyde was asking for, and receiving, at least five converts every day. Even then, Hyde knew God could do even greater works than that.²

Think about your own life. Have you grown satisfied with the present level of God's activity in and through you? Or do you long for more?

AT THE ALTAR

Several years ago my father and I spoke at a spiritual-leadership conference in Miami. I was inexperienced in leading such large meetings. My father was the headliner, and I was there as his junior apprentice.

We were to lead four sessions. I was scheduled to speak first each time, while Dad was asked to clean up my mess and close out each session. I felt pressure to keep my presentations brief because I knew everyone really wanted to hear him.

After our first session, my father surprised me. “Richard,” he told me, “I sense God using you in a special way in this conference. In the next session I’d like to speak first. I’ll try to be brief so you have plenty of time to share what God is laying on your heart.” This meant it was up to me to extend an altar call at the close of the service.

To say the least, I felt intimidated. Sitting in the front row before me was the greatest man of God I knew. What was I doing challenging people like him to get right with God?

As I concluded my sermon, I invited people to come forward to pray and find peace with God. Immediately I noticed my father quietly making his way to a place of prayer at the front of the platform. As I saw him kneeling there, I was taken

I was humbled that day.

aback. Here was the godliest man I knew, someone who was far better acquainted with God than I was. I thought, *What is he doing coming forward to pray after my message?*

Then the Holy Spirit said to me, *That’s why he’s such a strong Christian.*

My father has a deep hunger for God. He longs to experience God in all His dimensions. Therefore, he listens eagerly for a divine word, even when the messenger is his much-less-experienced son.

I was humbled that day, and I asked myself, “Am I willing to seek after God like that?”

‘YOU’RE NOT YOUR DAD!’

Thirteen years ago I was speaking in a church in Texas. I was a new seminary president, and I wanted to make a good impression. I knew

my father had previously delivered a powerful sermon in that church, and many of the people still remembered his message. I preached my heart out.

At the close of the service, the pastor asked me to remain at the front of the auditorium so people could greet me. The congregation was

You can't skip any of the steps.

gracious. Then an elderly saint approached me and peered straight in my face. "Well, son, you're good," she said, "but you're not your dad!"

I surmised she did not have the gift of encouragement. Still holding her hand, I replied, "You're so right. Would you pray for me that one day I might become even half the man of God my father is?"

She nodded.

Then I whispered, "Can I tell you a little secret about my father?" Her eyes grew larger, and she nodded vigorously. I said, "When my dad was *my* age, he wasn't my dad either!"

Spiritual growth is a process. You can't skip any of the steps. Some things take time and prolonged effort. But there's no reason to remain where you are. There's so much God wants to reveal to you. There's so much He wants to do through you. So wherever you are in your spiritual life, I encourage you to push on to the next level.

THIS BOOK'S GOAL

I hope this book inspires you to aim for nothing less than reaching that next level. I want you to attain spiritual heights you never dreamed were possible, to experience God working through your life in a powerful new dimension, to hear words from God that will dramatically change your life and your world.

The ensuing chapters will address the most common spiritual limitations people experience, and we'll consider ways to overcome these unnecessary boundaries. I want to help you blow past every limitation you've ever set for yourself in your Christian life.

The good news is, you don't have to stay where you are. So let's get going.