



HOW TO
ADVANCE IN
YOUR CALLING AND
NEVER GET STUCK



Level Up: How to Advance in Your Calling and Never Get Stuck

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Edited by Bruce Nygren, Addison Bevere, Cory Emberson, and Laura Willbur.

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To Leonardo,

*When your mother was pregnant with you,
she bought me a journal and encouraged me to
start recording life lessons for you.*

Here are some of those lessons.

Dadda

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FOREWORD

By John Bevere

Before I share my thoughts about this message, allow me to first share my heart about Chris, whom I've adopted as a spiritual son. I first met Chris in 2005 while I was on a ministry trip in Australia, and we have remained friends since. When we first met, I enjoyed his upbeat attitude and positive outlook on life. We often observe this in young believers, but sadly, watch it wane with time. Not with Chris! His enthusiasm is still contagious and electrifying. I'm convinced it is fueled by a genuine and deep love for Jesus Christ.

Chris worked in our Australian office, and in 2014 joined our World Headquarters in Colorado. In both locations, I've witnessed him serve in whatever capacity we asked. Not once has he refused or tried to get out of any task we put before him. Eventually, his communication abilities became evident to our leadership team. He is not only a gifted writer, but also an anointed teacher and preacher of God's Word. Over the years I've led Chris, I've watched him grow and navigate many tests and challenges—several of which could have caused him to abort his destiny. I'm so thankful he stayed the course!

At the start of 2020, I met with Chris and commissioned him to begin writing a book. Through prayer, I had sensed that he had a message inside of him that needed to come forth. And those who know me personally understand very well that this is not something I casually ask someone to do.

The message you now hold in your hands is a result of Chris remaining faithful to God and the calling on his life. Throughout the following pages, you'll discover that life is lived on levels, which also means that your calling is outworked through levels. When you fully

grasp this truth, not only will you achieve all that God plans to accomplish in your present season, you'll also ensure your upward progress toward realizing your potential.

Your calling demands your full commitment. As you give yourself wholeheartedly to what God has called and gifted you to do, you'll not only level up; you'll make your life count, both now and for eternity. Regardless of your age or your accomplishments up until this point, you'll always have more to give and to contribute.

I'm so proud of Chris for writing this book. *Level Up* is a needed source of encouragement to strengthen and guide you along your upward journey. It will also equip you with the tools and insights required to advance in your calling and never get stuck. We have one shot at this life to give it everything we have. Let's hold nothing back, and let's be emptied, pouring ourselves out completely both in our service to others and as a gift to God.

I'm cheering you on as you Level Up and multiply your effectiveness!

John Bevere

Bestselling author and minister

Co-founder of Messenger International

LEVELS

Keep Progressing without Becoming Stuck!

“You’re full of potential!”

I’m sure you’ve heard these words spoken over you before. Perhaps it was from a parent, a teacher, or a coach. As early as I could remember, my school report cards would always contain a short note: “Chris is full of potential.” If I’m honest, it was a kind way for my teachers to inform my parents that I was underperforming.

When we consider this statement on our potential, we can conclude that it’s one of the most encouraging things to hear; yet it’s also one of the most discouraging things to hear—depending on when or how you hear it. On one hand, it’s a statement packed with promise pointing to all you can be and have not yet become; all you can do and have not yet done. On the other hand, it’s an indication that there’s room for growth and improvement—that you’re underperforming, not at the level you should be—just like my childhood report cards!

Perhaps later in life, we hit a point where we stop and begin to wonder why we’re “here” and not “there.” And by “there,” I mean the expectations we had for ourselves. Life hasn’t turned out the way we thought it would, and we often feel like we’re once again reviewing a report card informing us that we’re underperforming, or worse, failing. It can even

feel like others have moved forward with their life while yours remains at a standstill. And it's in these moments when we must accept that it's not enough to be full of potential unless it is being realized.

Let's face it, one of the greatest tragedies in life is unfulfilled potential—all that could have been but never was. Sobering, isn't it?

In order to bridge the potential gap, we must first realize that everywhere we look, life is lived on levels. When I consider the concept of levels, I think of progression, like in physical growth, as we progress from childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood. We see levels in our education system, as we progress from elementary, to middle school, to high school, to college. The athletic system is played on levels, ranging from local, to state, to national. There are levels in leadership, government, and even video games! Homes and buildings are built on levels. And that's just the short list. Levels are everywhere you look.

Realizing our potential is a process of becoming, which is accomplished on levels. The benefit of progressing on levels is that we can grow incrementally, in phases and stages, allowing our growth to occur both organically and intentionally, rather than all at once.

So, before we move on, let's first establish what I mean by "level up." The best analogy I can think of is like that of leveling up in a video game. I don't consider myself a gamer, but I did play my fair share of video games as a child. (A big cowabunga to all my Ninja Turtles arcade fans!)

The goal of every level isn't just to win it, but to gain as much as you can from it. Within every level, there is always something to obtain or learn that you will need at a later time. Whether it's a hidden Easter egg, a special weapon, or golden coins—all of these items have a unique value and are often needed to help you both advance to the next level and function effectively within it. There are also items that help accelerate your progress, causing you to move forward in leaps and bounds. So, to level up means both to be equipped for the next level and to also advance to it.

Right now, you may not be where you want to be, but let me assure

you: you're further along than you realize, and you're doing better than you think you are!

An Upward Path

The path of life leads upward for the wise; they leave the grave behind. (Proverbs 15:24 NLT)

Our life is designed to have an upward trajectory. Every time you find yourself leveling up in life, you'll find yourself becoming more alive and energized, leaving the "grave" behind. That's because your potential was never meant to remain buried within you. I've often heard it said that if you're not progressing, you're regressing. And with every advancement to a new level, a new version of yourself will emerge.

Therefore, if we're wise, we'll follow God's paths which lead upward, paths that are uniquely designed to help us grow "stronger and stronger with every step forward" (Psalm 84:7 TPT). With this newfound strength, we too will discover, "The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon *mine high places*" (Habakkuk 3:19 KJV). Another translation says, "He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk . . . and make [spiritual] progress upon my high places [of trouble, suffering, or responsibility]!" (AMPC).

So, we see that the "high places" we're called to refer to making spiritual progress that help us realize our potential—which at times will involve trouble and suffering.

In Hannah Hurnard's classic novel, *Hinds' Feet on High Places*, we find a great depiction of this upward journey that every child of God is invited to experience. This powerful allegory reveals the deep yearning we all possess for new heights of growth, adventure, and challenge.

The book reveals the spiritual journey of a timid young woman

named Much-Afraid. Throughout her upward journey, Much-Afraid experiences life-defining moments as she navigates trouble, challenges, and the need to take responsibility for her growth. Along the way, she overcomes her tormenting fears and reaches the High Places, where she receives a new identity and experiences transformation.

The upward path, as Much-Afraid discovered, is a journey of becoming. Once again, realizing our potential occurs on levels. It doesn't happen in a moment; it happens with a culmination of moments. These moments must be maximized, and will require trust, courage, and a commitment to stay the course.

Similar to Much-Afraid, our upward journey will involve dangers and challenges, rewards and victory. Through it all, we'll not only grow closer to Jesus; we'll also awaken to our True Self and experience a transformation that's only possible as we embark on this upward path. But here's the reality: everyone is invited to the high places, yet not all of us accept this challenge.

I appreciate the stories of those, like the apostle Paul, who pursued their own upward journey. He wrote:

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12–14)

Paul stated that his focus and passion was “the prize of the upward call.” Everything he did was in pursuit of this goal, which was to know Jesus, become like Him, and fulfill the Lord's purpose for his life. But in order for Paul to reach the upward prize, he had to avoid settling for where he'd already been and what he'd already accomplished. He had to

continue to level up—pressing onward and upward.

I've observed that many people don't reach the heights of their calling because they're not pressing toward it. They've settled for a lower level of living—one void of purpose, passion, and power. That's why I've written this book. I'm pursuing this upward call, because I want all that God has destined for me. And I desire the same for you.

Why settle for the low calling when the high calling is within your reach?

Little by Little

God leads us into His plans and purposes on levels. This concept is clearly depicted in His dealings with the children of Israel, both the first and second generations, prior to entering the Promised Land. To the first generation, He explained:

I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you.

Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. (Exodus 23:29–30 ESV)

Here we find the Lord leading the children of Israel forward little by little. We can also substitute “little by little” with “level by level.” His strategy for leading them this way was to give them an opportunity to grow and increase, thus gaining strength for greater conquest. Unfortunately, that generation refused to enter the Promised Land due to their unbelief and disobedience.

This points out that our destiny is not automatic; we must step into it obediently, as the Lord leads. So, a whole generation died in the wilderness as the next generation arose. When it was time for them to possess the Promised Land, the Lord also explained:

And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you *little by little*; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become *too* numerous for you. (Deuteronomy 7:22)

Again, the Lord leads His people forward “little by little” or “level by level.”

This idea of progressing in levels is also observed in the New Testament. When Jesus described the kingdom, He would often use metaphors of growth and expansion that would occur on levels. Consider this example:

And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. (Mark 4:26–28)

Did you see that progression of growth on levels—first the blade, then the head, and after that, the full grain? Unless it’s a miracle, everything occurs in levels, stages, and phases.

We live in a day and age in which we want it all and we want it now, but we fail to realize that we are living in a piece of God’s overall plan for our lives right now—it’s just unfolding gradually, little by little. We may not always see the big picture, but we will when we continue to grow and progress into our potential.

As we look back on our journey with God, I’m sure we’re thankful that He’s led us forward gradually. Think about it! If God, all at once, just dumped on us the full responsibility of all He’s called us to do, we’d probably break! That’s what God was indicating to the children of Israel when He said, “lest the beasts of the field become *too* numerous for you.”

In other words, if He'd given them the Promised Land all at once, they would never have been able to handle it. It's the grace and mercy of God to lead us forward on levels.

Promotion to Potential

When we think of advancing in levels, it's common to think of being promoted to a new position or rank. Although this is true, I'd like for us to rethink what we mean by "promotion," a word that has two primary meanings. The first is what we seek in our career, such as "being raised in position or rank."

In his book *The Peter Principle*, author Lawrence J. Peter observes that people in a hierarchy structure tend to rise to their level of incompetence. (Yes, you read that correctly!) Peter means that employees are frequently promoted based on their level of success in previous roles and positions, until they reach a level at which they are no longer competent, because skills in one job do not necessarily transfer well to another. For example, if a person is crushing it in a sales position, this does not guarantee success in the role of sales manager.

This leads us to the second definition for promotion, which is "furthering the growth or development of something." When a person is promoted to a new position, they have the capacity to grow in their new role. Even if they begin at a level of incompetence, they can still adapt and adjust to their new role and responsibilities. That encourages me, because it means I can not only *go to new levels*, but I can also *grow to new levels*. And that changes everything!

I like the term "promotion to potential." This is the core message of this book—*growing* to new levels, not just being promoted to new levels. It's worth repeating that realizing our potential is a process of becoming that is accomplished on levels.

If you've ever dreamed of being more than the person you presently are, or if you've ever envisioned yourself doing more than what you're

doing now—then let's get started! You can begin taking strides toward those dreams today.

These strides will occur on levels.



Growing into new levels is necessary for your continued progression toward the upward call. And by the “upward call,” I’m referring to God’s purpose and plan for your life. Each of us is on a journey, and how we navigate our way determines how high we’ll reach. Let’s refuse to stay stuck and stagnant and, together, let’s discover how to ascend by levels to the heights of our calling!

CHEAT CODE

If we are to activate more of our “potential” on the upward path with God, we need to evaluate our progress on the journey. At the conclusion of each chapter, a short list of significant ideas to remember is added, as well as several reflection questions to help make what you’re learning personal and practical. Take the time to fully benefit from the book’s message by assessing your current level, and how—with the Spirit’s help—you can “Level Up.”

Remember

- It’s not enough to be full of potential—it must be realized.
- Personal growth occurs in levels.
- One of the greatest tragedies in life is unfulfilled potential.
- Destiny is not automatic; we must step into it obediently.

Reflect

1. Are you progressing in your calling? In what ways have you felt stuck and frustrated?
2. How does understanding that life is lived on levels encourage you to keep growing?
3. In order for you to level up, what immediate action is required of you?

NEXT UP

Shift from Where You Have Potential to Where You Are Potent!

Potential is a word packed with promise and carries with it the possibility of discovering more. But, if we are going to discover this more and realize all that we could become and do, we must move from where we have *potential* to where we are *potent*.

Potent is another word which I love that means “having great power or effect.”¹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary states that it means “achieving or bringing about a particular result.” My personal definition is “present-tense power.” A person who is potent is a person who is realizing their potential—alive with purpose, passion, and power. Therefore, potent is a posture that positions you to come alive.

The words of civil rights leader Howard Thurman capture the beauty of this potent posture: “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs are people who have come alive.”

It’s time to come alive.

Activation

To transition from where we have potential to where we are potent,

our potential must be activated. Triggering our untapped ability begins with an awakening followed by action, acquisition, and association, all of which lead to actualization. These stages are not one-offs but are cyclical throughout each level of life. Let's briefly dive into each of these areas. (As a side note, we'll also further explore these concepts in other chapters.)

Awakening

Potential is connected to purpose. When you discover your purpose, you can begin to unlock your potential. There are many ways these moments of awakening can happen, but they all originate from God, whether through a sovereign interruption or by diligent seeking.

Here's something I've learned about hearing God: pay attention to what is happening within you. Our hearts know things that our minds don't. Unless it has been suppressed, each of us are gripped by a sense of divine purpose that mysteriously guides and directs our paths. We know deep down that we are here on purpose for a purpose. Solomon recorded, "He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]" (Ecclesiastes 3:11 AMP).

These moments of awakening often resonate with what our hearts know to be true, even if it doesn't immediately make sense to our minds. That's because God shapes His will in us far more than He speaks His will to us: "For it is . . . God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13 AMP).

In Acts 7:23, we're told of Moses's moment of awakening to his purpose: "Now when he was forty years old, *it came into his heart* to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." Notice the words "it came into his heart." An awakening occurred, and Moses began shifting from where he had potential to where he was potent.

In the following verses, we're told how he killed an Egyptian who

was mistreating an Israelite and how he also tried to break up a fight between two Hebrew men (v. 23–29). Moses’s potential as Israel’s deliverer was beginning to be realized, even though the timing was a little off and no one could recognize it at the time (see Acts 7:23–36). Moses, nonetheless, was coming alive. His life would take on new meaning. Purpose had been awakened, and he would never be the same.

As we’ve seen, people who have come alive are those who have discovered their purpose, which, as a result, ignites their passion and activates their potential. Moses’s moment was by an act of sovereignty, but you do not have to wait for moments like that—you can also seek them out.

It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone. (Ephesians 1:11–12 MSG)

Through diligently seeking the Lord—the one who knows the plans and designs He has for you—you, too, can awaken to your purpose and begin your upward journey—taking your place and playing your part in God’s overall plan for humanity. (I share more about this in the chapters titled *Higher Places* and *Make the Shift*.)

Action

Once you become aware of your purpose, you also become aware of your potential. They are closely related. This awakening necessitates action. Because once you come alive with purpose, passion is sparked to fuel your pursuit of it—which, as I’ve already stated, enables you to realize your potential and level up into God’s plans and purposes for your life.

One of the reasons people fail to act is because they are expecting God to do everything for them. In turn, they fail to take responsibility for their lives. And, as a result, they disempower themselves and become victims of

external forces, waiting to be seen and picked.

Seth Godin articulated this perfectly:

“The opportunity of a lifetime is to pick yourself. Quit waiting to get picked; quit waiting for someone to give you permission; quit waiting for someone to say you are officially qualified and pick yourself. It doesn’t mean you have to be an entrepreneur or a freelancer, but it does mean you stand up and say, ‘I have something to say. I know how to do something. I’m doing it. If you want me to do it with you, raise your hand.’”

Picking yourself doesn’t mean you become a lone ranger and ride alone. Picking yourself looks more like believing in yourself, believing in what God has given you and not waiting for the validation of others. Look at what the apostle Paul shared:

Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don’t be impressed with yourself. Don’t compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life. (Galatians 6:4–5 MSG)

Agency and action go hand in hand. Unless you take responsibility for exploring your identity and purpose, your potential will remain hidden and unknown. To be responsible means to be answerable or accountable for something within one’s power, control, or management. It’s doing the things you are supposed to do and accepting the results of your actions.

A person is most potent when they take responsibility for their own life. Begin taking action, and fully immerse yourself in doing the creative best you can with the gifts, resources, and opportunities you’ve been given. More seems to happen when we proactively move into the

future rather than simply letting life happen. And each step of obedience you take is like a puzzle piece. As the pieces come together, the big picture is made clear. (I share more on this in the chapters titled *Reposition Yourself* and *Doors, Windows, and Opportunity*.)

Acquisition

In the previous chapter, I used the analogy of a virtual video game to describe what I mean by leveling up. Remember, the goal of every level isn't just to simply get through it, but to gain as much as you can from it. Within every level, there is always something to obtain or learn that you will need later.

Along our upward path, we need to be consistently acquiring skills, knowledge, and experiences that are unique and necessary to fulfill our purpose and realize our potential. (I share more about this in the chapters titled *Leverage Your Level* and *Up Your Game*.)

Associations

Another thing that helps activate our potential are relationships—those we surround ourselves with along the upward path. These relationships greatly influence the trajectory of our lives and our development into our potential. They have the ability to see aptitudes and abilities in us that we're not even aware of. (I share more about this in the chapter titled *A Hand Up*.)

Actualization

One of the greatest rewards in life is growing into your potential and actualizing God's plans and purposes for your life. On the flip side, one of the greatest tragedies in life is unfulfilled potential—not realizing all that God had destined for you. Innumerable individuals have robbed the world of their God-given talents and abilities by taking them to the grave—undeveloped and unrealized.

Citing Howard Thurman once again, consider this riveting allegory he used that brings perspective to what we're discussing:

“Imagine, if you will, being on your deathbed, and standing around your bed are the ghosts of the ideas, the abilities, the talents, the gifts, the dreams given to you by life. That you, for whatever reason, never pursued those dreams. You never did anything with those ideas. You never used those talents. You never used those gifts. You never took advantage of those opportunities. And there they are, standing around your bed, looking at you before you take your last dying breath, looking at you with angry eyes saying, ‘We came to you, and only you could have given us life and now we must die with you forever.’”

Sobering, isn't it? If you died today, what dreams, desires, and ideas would die with you? What gifts and abilities would remain unknown and undeveloped? What knowledge and insights would be buried forever? What about the people whose lives will not be impacted by what you had to offer? Or worse, what do you think it would be like when you're standing before Christ at the Judgment Seat giving an account of the way you stewarded what was entrusted to you?

Remember: it's not enough to be full of potential . . . unless it's being realized.

Are You Passive or Potent?

Ben Stiller's *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* is one of my all-time favorite movies. The story's hero, Walter Mitty, is a daydreamer—a *LIFE* Magazine employee who spends his days in the company's basement reviewing negatives and developing photos—desperate to escape his mundane existence through a fantasy world filled with heroism, romance, and adventure.

Early in the movie, Walter receives a call from Todd, an eHarmony employee who calls to question him about the “been there, done that” section of his online dating profile. After an awkward pause, Walter confesses to having nothing noteworthy to mention—a response that

clearly depicts his life up until that moment. A life many settle for—existing rather than truly living.

But as the movie progresses, so does Walter. We watch him rise above passivity and shift from where he has potential to where he becomes potent. And it's nothing short of inspirational! Walter grows from a dreamer to a risk-taker—cycling toward active volcanoes, jumping off helicopters into shark-infested waters, and winning the heart of the woman of his dreams! His transformation is undeniable. And it's a transformation that's possible for anyone brave enough to grow into their potential.

Can you relate to Walter? Perhaps you dream of who you could become and what you could accomplish but lack the courage and resolve to move in that direction? If you were asked about your “been there, done that” section, what would you share?

What do your answers reveal about your life? Are you living a passive or a potent life?

Release Your Potential

Before we move on, let's look at what stifles and suppresses your potential, leaving you in a state of slumber. In his second letter to the believers at Corinth, the apostle Paul empathetically spoke to a dilemma that hinders many from leveling up:

Dear, dear Corinthians, I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively! (2 Corinthians 6:11–13 MSG)

The key word here is *expansively*, which describes having a life with the capacity to grow and expand in order to reach your maximum

potential. The opposite of this is to live a life that's confined and limited. Are you living your life in a small way—limited and fenced in? Is it time for you to begin living openly and expansively?

A simple example is the term “pot-bound,” which is used to describe a houseplant that's outgrown its pot. Symptoms of such a plant are stunted growth, frequent wilting, smaller new leaves, poor quality of flowers, and limited space for root spread and expansion. For a pot-bound plant to survive and reach its potential growth, it must be removed from its small pot into a more spacious container.

Living your life in a small way means you're not growing into your potential. If we want to avoid stunting our growth and becoming “pot-bound,” we need to open up our life and live expansively. This involves obediently following God along the upward journey as we grow, mature, develop, deepen our roots, and bear more fruit.

Throughout the Bible, you'll find those God called living their lives in a small way—that is, until He opened their lives to purpose. At the root of this smallness was inferiority—that persistent sense of feeling small, unimportant, powerless, and inadequate.

Moses's inferiority was rooted in his speech impediment, and he kept raising objections to God, even pleading with Him to send someone else: “Master, please, I don't talk well. I've never been good with words, neither before nor after you spoke to me. I stutter and stammer . . . Oh, Master, please! Send somebody else!” (Exodus 4:10, 13 MSG).

Gideon was another who struggled with inferiority. His was rooted in his social and family status: “But how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest one in Manasseh, and everyone else in my family is more important than I am” (Judges 6:15 CEV).

David's struggle was like Gideon's. When Saul brought him to the palace, he responded, “How could I possibly marry your daughter? I'm not very important, and neither is my family” (1 Samuel 18:18 CEV). Both Gideon and David viewed themselves as insignificant.

One of the most unforgettable accounts is that of the spies who were sent out to scout the Promised Land. Their sense of inferiority

disabled them, and they forfeited their destiny: “We felt as small as grasshoppers and that is how we must have looked to them!” (Numbers 13:33 CEV).

Think about these accounts. With each one of them, God was about to take them to new levels of purpose, which would also cause them to realize greater levels of potential—enabling them to discover strength they never knew they had and to accomplish things they never knew they could do.

Some did. Others didn't.

What will you do?

These words by Marianne Williamson have been a source of strength for me. I'd like to share them with you:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

My prayer and hope are that you'll be like those who, despite their insecurities and inadequacies, chose to overcome themselves so they could become better versions of themselves. No one can get you out of God's will for your life except you. And honestly, we can often be our own worst enemy. So, don't sabotage your destiny just because you don't feel good enough. Become good enough!

Next Up

One area in which advancement to new levels is evident is professional sports. I'm an avid NBA fan, and one of my favorite events every year (other than the NBA playoffs) is the NBA draft. As I once had hoop dreams of my own, I used to imagine my name being called by the commissioner as the number-one pick (or at least a top-three pick). Ugh . . . if only I had been a bit taller!

Draft day is a big day for team owners and general managers looking to rebuild or strengthen their rosters. Extensive scouting and research have been invested in drafting the right players. Throughout the years, this has included prospects like Shaquille O'Neal, LeBron James, and Zion Williamson—rising stars since middle school that had coaches drooling. A common term spoken over these up-and-comers is, “Next Up,” an idiom The Urban Dictionary defines as, “When someone or something is on the verge of blowing up and becoming really successful.” It's like saying, “Keep an eye on this one; you're going to hear more about him in the near future!”

Highly touted prospects at the collegiate level don't always meet expectations at the pro level. They become draft busts! For example, do you remember Sam Bowie? If not—he's the guy drafted number two by the Portland Trailblazers in the 1984 draft . . . one spot ahead of a guy named Michael Jordan, who was third overall. (Ouch! A bad day for the Trailblazers!)

Why is a player a bust? There are many reasons, but the most common is that they fail to make the necessary adjustments to compete at the pro level. On the contrary, many college players who are not considered “the cream of the crop” and were not high draft picks have excelled in the pros. What made the difference? And how does this apply to us in our sphere of influence?

We'll discuss the answers to these questions and much more throughout this book. But for now, we can conclude that high potential does not always equate to high performance. And success on one level

does not guarantee success at the next. This is why it's not enough to be full of potential. We must be committed to leveling up into it.

Courage Is Calling

Recently, I read about a man who had a recurring dream of a lion chasing him until he would fall over exhausted, trying to escape. Without fail, he'd wake up sweating profusely and with his heart racing. Desperate for answers, this man met with his pastor, hoping to understand what this recurring dream meant. They discussed potential meanings of what the lion could represent—his boss, his wife, the devil, etc.—but none of these explanations resonated with either of them.

After an hour of discussion, the pastor suggested they pray. As they did, he asked the man to recall the dream in his mind, and instead of running away from the lion, he instructed the man to stand still and ask the lion who he is and what he wants.

When the time came for the man to confront the lion, he found himself face to face with it. As the lion stood there, sniffing and snorting, the man asked, "Who are you?" To his amazement, the lion responded, "I am your courage and your strength. Why are you running away from me?"

This dream resonated with me so much, as it perfectly conveys the idea of moving from where we have potential to where we are potent. We need not be afraid of our potential—who we're capable of becoming and what we're capable of accomplishing. Of course, this journey of becoming is scary, and will no doubt require courage. But I encourage you to be more afraid of regret than you are of risk.

Your playing small does not serve the world. Courage is calling for you. It's time to shift from where you have potential to where you are potent.

You're next up!

CHEAT CODE

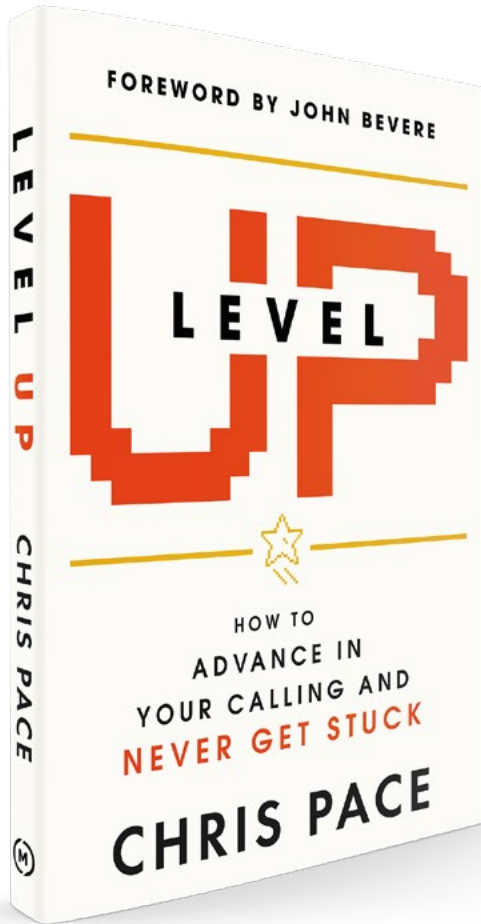
Remember

- A person who is potent is a person who is realizing their potential—alive with purpose, passion, and power. Therefore, potent is a posture that positions you to come alive.
- To transition from where we have potential to where we are potent, our potential must be activated.
- Our hearts know things that our minds don't.
- A person is most potent when they take responsibility for their own life.

Reflect

1. Are you taking responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life?
2. In what areas of your life are you passive instead of potent? What needs to change?
3. Are you waiting to be picked and given permission by others to pursue your purpose? If so, why?

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