

INTRODUCTION

Everyone desires a lifetime of hope, health, and happiness. And in some ways, we all believe that we haven't attained it. We long for areas of our life to change. We long for freedom – freedom from our addictions, freedom from worry, freedom from debt, freedom from overeating, or freedom to choose a different career – even if it means that we have to go back to school. All of us seek a happy life, but many of us don't know how to begin to find it. Too many obstacles have blocked our way. We've made mistakes. Regrets have formed. Escape led nowhere, while blaming others only entrapped us more. We all eventually reach a place of exhaustion and need a new vision for life.

This book is designed to help you contemplate change. Psychiatrist and spiritual counselor Gerald May writes, “How much can I respect myself if I do not even know what I really want?” Contemplation is the tool that we use to get an idea of the life we've always wanted. This is a difficult task to accomplish alone. We need a guide. We need a way to pinpoint the broken areas, the areas in need of change. This is the purpose of *Journey to Freedom*. It will guide you to a new life and provide some of the answers as to why life has not turned out the way you'd planned. We'll make suggestions, but self-examination is the way that you'll get the most out of this study.

The Bible says, “If you want to build a tower, you first sit down and decide how much it will cost, to see if you have enough money to finish the job. If you don't, you might lay the foundation, but you would not be able to finish.” This book is a blueprint that will assist you in counting the cost of change. The last thing we want is for you to lay a foundation of change and then run out of steam before reaching your goals, so we created this book to help you get off to a strong start on your journey to freedom.

The YMCA has been fortunate to be involved in great programs of change. YMCA staff invented basketball and volleyball. The first pro football team was organized at the YMCA. Bodybuilding, racquetball, Father's Day, the Gideons, Toastmasters, softball, swimming and aquatics, group child care, and the Boy Scouts of America have all been either started at the YMCA or influenced by it. This is why I collaborated with the YMCA to establish Restore Ministries as a core outreach program of the YMCA of Middle Tennessee. I knew that the combined efforts for change would result in hundreds of changed lives, and it has. Restore has grown from just fifty participants in 2000 to over two thousand participants to date. Regardless of the participants' issues, they established boundaries, defeated obsessions, improved their relationships, regained hope, and grew stronger in spirit.

Parts of the study will combine Restore's process of change with the events that led to the invention of basketball at the YMCA training school in Springfield, Massachusetts, the invention of volleyball at YMCA in Holyoke, Massachusetts, and the invention of racquetball in 1950 at the Greenwich, Connecticut YMCA. But this is not a history book. It's about change. It's about your life. It's a blueprint to build a new beginning. This revolutionary program of change contains six days in a week, for a total of thirty-six days.

Dr. James Prochaska, author of *Changing for Good*, believes that there are six well-defined stages of change: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination. For the next thirty-six days, we will focus on the first three stages – pre-contemplation, contemplation, and preparation. Only 20 percent of people with problems are ready for change, but more than 90 percent of behavior change programs are solely for those 20 percent of people already prepared to move forward. Because of that, this book is about contemplating change. In the next thirty-six days, we'll do nothing but contemplate how to change, when to change, what to change, and where change needs to occur, and at the end of

the thirty-six days, you can decide to continue the journey by writing a Plan of Action for your new life – or you can decide to keep the life you have. The choice is yours.

So relax. You're contemplating a journey to freedom. Listen to your spirit, your mind, and your body. Let them lead you to a new vision for life.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOING DEEPER QUESTIONS

At the end of each day's readings, you will find a section called Going Deeper. This section will help you process, explore, and put into action what you just experienced. Going Deeper is designed for those who want to spend more time getting to know God and themselves. It is not required – but it is worth the extra energy to do. We are excited at the thought of you growing closer to God, growing closer to your group, and growing closer to a vision for your life through the Going Deeper section. Enjoy!

- SCOTT REALL, Director of Restore Ministries, a life-changing ministry of the YMCA