



FOREWORD BY ANDY STANLEY

UNLEASH!
PERRY NOBLE
BREAKING FREE FROM NORMALCY

“In 2000 Perry Noble shared with me his dream of pastoring a church of one thousand people. As we talked, I sensed God’s hand on his life, so it did not surprise me when I received a card from Perry letting me know that the church had reached one thousand attendees. Much to my delight, I have received fifteen additional notes from Perry—every time another goal of one thousand is reached. Today as I write this, the average attendance of all seven campuses of NewSpring Church is sixteen thousand people. It has been my joy and delight to mentor Perry and watch him grow. Perry knows the power of living an unleashed life, and now you can too. I am delighted to recommend his book to you. It will challenge you to be all you can be!”

JOHN C. MAXWELL

Author and speaker

“My friend Perry Noble has experienced the Holy Spirit’s transforming power in his life and his church, and he wants the same for you. This book will give you hope that the powerful grace of God is really and truly available to you in Jesus Christ.”

MARK DRISCOLL

Founding pastor of Mars Hill Church, cofounder of the Acts 29 church-planting network, founder of Resurgence, and *New York Times* #1 bestselling author

“I love this book! It clearly identifies many of the hidden hindrances to the life God intends for you to live. Each chapter is chock-full of practical wisdom you can immediately apply to experience a breakthrough in areas you thought could never change.”

RICK WARREN

Pastor of Saddleback Church and *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Purpose Driven Life*

“Perry Noble is a man of unswerving and uncompromising faith in God. He preaches and leads with boldness and conviction like few other leaders I’ve met. Now he has turned that passion to the page to help us all learn how to leave normal behind and live a life unleashed.”

STEVEN FURTICK

Lead pastor of Elevation Church and author of *Sun Stand Still*

“Perry Noble is one of the most gifted communicators I know, and he has a true pastor’s heart. In *Unleash!* he uncompromisingly deals with common life struggles while constantly emphasizing that we can build God’s Kingdom only through His grace and His power. I am blessed to know Perry, and you will be blessed by the message the Lord has given him.”

ROBERT MORRIS

Senior pastor of Gateway Church and bestselling author of *The Blessed Life*, *From Dream to Destiny*, and *The God I Never Knew*

“If you’re tired of doing things halfway and are ready to experience God’s power in a new way, you are ready for *Unleash!* In his new book, Perry Noble pushes you to unleash your spiritual potential by going full throttle with Christ. Get ready!”

CRAIG GROESCHEL

Senior pastor of LifeChurch.tv and author of *Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World*



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TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC., CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS 

Visit Tyndale online at www.tyndale.com.

Visit the author's website at www.perrynoble.com.

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Unleash!: Breaking Free from Normalcy

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Designed by Dean H. Renninger

Edited by Stephanie Rische

Published in association with Yates & Yates (www.yates2.com).

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Noble, Perry.

Unleash! : breaking free from normalcy / Perry Noble.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-4143-6679-1 (pbk.)

1. Christian life. 2. David, King of Israel. I. Title.

BV4501.3.N63 2012

248.4—dc23

2012019668

Printed in the United States of America

18 17 16 15 14 13 12
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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FOREWORD

“If God, the Creator of the universe, created us on purpose, with a purpose, and for a purpose, then why in the world would we be willing to settle for anything less?”

That’s a really good question.

And that’s only one of many good questions you’ll be forced to wrestle to the ground in this insightful, entertaining, and practical book by my good friend Perry Noble. The truth is, *Unleash!* should come with a warning label. If it did, it would read something like this: Warning! Every excuse you have for not doing something extraordinary with your life is about to be taken away.

Perry peels away excuses more quickly than a four-year-old peels off a scab. Yeah, I know. That’s a bit graphic. But if you know anything about the author of this book, then you know I’m just getting you warmed up for the main event.

Perry and I have been friends for years. In addition to our mutual love for all things Southern, we are joined at the *vision*. Within a year of each other, God birthed in our hearts the desire to create a church for unchurched people. Like Atlanta, Anderson, South Carolina, didn’t need just another church. Anderson needed a different kind of church. So in 1999 Perry and his wife, Lucretia,

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stepped out of their comfort zones and founded NewSpring Church. Under Perry's leadership, NewSpring has become not only one of the fastest-growing churches in the country but also one of the fastest-reproducing churches in the country. If every church leader had a vision for his or her state like Perry does for South Carolina, our nation would be better in every respect.

Knowing Perry the way I do, I'm convinced that the term *unleash* accurately captures the heartbeat and intensity of his life and ministry. Through his disarming transparency and authenticity, Perry has helped to unleash the potential in thousands of people. His unique communication style has captured the imagination of a generation that had given up on church but still longed for purpose. And now, with the publication of his first book, his influence is about to be unleashed to an even broader audience.

Perry writes, "God has a habit of taking average, ordinary people and using them to accomplish extraordinary things." While I doubt anyone who knows Perry would consider him average or ordinary, there is no arguing that what God has done through Perry is extraordinary. More important, when you are finished with this book, you'll be convinced God can do something extraordinary through you, as well.

I have no doubt you'll love this book. But I'm equally convinced that you won't be too far into it before you discover why so many of us love Perry Noble. So get yourself a highlighter. Then put on your big-boy pants. You're about to be unleashed!

Andy Stanley

THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS!

My mother-in-law has a really awesome red Mustang.

A few years ago I borrowed her car for the day when my family and I were visiting my in-laws over the Thanksgiving holidays. I drove the Mustang around for several hours and generally had a blast in it. I ran a few errands, stopped to see some friends, and grabbed a cup of java at a local coffee shop.

Of course, since I typically drive an SUV and am used to riding up a little higher, it took some time to adjust to being so low to the ground. I had to move the seats because I am way taller than my mother-in-law. I played with the radio and found a few stations I liked. I tinkered with the mirrors so I could see behind me. By the end of the day I had come to the conclusion that the car was pretty nice. It got me to where I needed to go, and I had zero complaints. In fact, I'd really enjoyed cruising around in it.

Then, on my way back to my in-laws' house, I had a thought: *This is a Mustang. I wonder if it has any power under the hood.*

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Let me pause here and say I have no idea why it took so long for this thought to develop. After all, it was a *Mustang*. I guess I'd been driving a sluggish vehicle for so long that the idea of "blazing a trail" didn't even cross my mind.

With a question like that sitting out there, I obviously had no choice but to stomp on the gas and find out.

Before I knew it, the car was sliding sideways and the tires were screaming for mercy—the Mustang had been unleashed! Had I not let off the gas, I would have lost control completely.

I drove the rest of the way back in stunned silence (which, if you know me, is pretty amazing). I had no idea the car had so much power—the kind of power that could make me nearly mess my pants! I'd been riding around in the vehicle all day, adjusting little things here and there, yet I never took the time to discover whether the car had the ability to leave a few marks on the road.

As I pulled into the driveway of my in-laws' house, I thought, *If I had known this car had that kind of power, I would have driven it a lot differently today—and I would have had a lot more fun while I was at it.*

Unfortunately, a lot of us look at our lives the way I treated that Mustang. As human beings created in the image of God, we are overflowing with unlimited potential, fueled by His limitless power, yet we choose to cruise through life tinkering with the radio and the mirrors, never discovering who God has called us to be. In other words, we never live a life that is truly unleashed.

Two thousand years ago Jesus was raised from the dead, proving what He said in John 16:33—that this world has no power over Him. The world gave its best shot at holding Him down, but three days later He was unleashed from the power of the grave. One of the most fascinating and hard-to-believe things about Christianity is that Jesus lives in us. If the resurrected Son of God

lives inside us, that means we, too, can be unleashed from everything that threatens to hold us back from who God wants us to be.

Jesus has made it possible for us to live an unleashed life. Whether we realize it or not, Jesus made the first move. Now He is waiting on us to make the next one.

Just as I'd been oblivious to the Mustang's power for most of the day, most of us don't even consider living a life that is unleashed. Instead, we settle for average, routine, predictable. But the Bible describes the life of a Christ follower as anything but boring. God doesn't want us to live mediocre, mundane lives.

**Jesus made the first move.
Now He is waiting on us
to make the next one.**

If that's the case, then why do so many of us wake up in the morning fully expecting nothing more than "normal"?

I'm here to tell you that it's completely possible to live a life beyond normal.

It's completely possible to live with purpose rather than stumble through our days trying to figure out, *Why in the world am I here?*

It's completely possible to live a life marked by freedom and passion rather than one filled with regret and shame.

It's completely possible to live in right relationships with other people rather than let unforgiveness hold us hostage.

It's completely possible for the tragedies in our lives to make us stronger rather than cripple us.

It's completely possible to end strong at the finish line rather than limp along in defeat.

It's completely possible to move beyond normalcy and embrace the abundant life God has for us.

So what are you waiting for? It's time to live a life that is . . . *unleashed!*

SHOWING UP AT THE DANCE

When I was in middle school, I attended every single dance our school had.

Michael Jackson's *Thriller* album was at the top of the charts, and a new form of dancing called break dancing had come into vogue. Almost everyone under the age of eighteen thought they should at least give it a shot (which for many people was a really bad idea).

On the night of a dance I would get my parents to drive me to the school early, and I was usually among the last ones to leave. I tell you seriously, I didn't miss a single one.

Yet in spite of all of the dances I attended, I never actually danced. Ever.

I talked about dancing. I thought about dancing. I watched other people dancing. Quite a few times I almost had the courage to walk onto the dance floor and *try* dancing.

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But I didn't. I was one of those guys who was always at the dance but never actually danced.

When I take an honest look at my own life and the lives of the people around me, I have to wonder: are we doing the same thing when it comes to following Christ? Maybe we think about doing something radical for God. Maybe we even dream that one day we'll be more than we are today. But we end up merely standing against the wall, never experiencing the rhythm of God's grace. We don't embrace His promise of a life that is beyond our imagination.

When I read the Gospels, I am consistently amazed by the words of Jesus. When it comes to the kind of life He wants us to live, He made some pretty amazing promises:

All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

JOHN 10:8-10

Anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.

JOHN 14:12

If you have faith and don't doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, "May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea," and it will happen. You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it.

MATTHEW 21:21-22

I could go on, but I'm sure you get the point. God has promised us an abundant life, not a dull one. He said we would do greater things than He did, which is pretty remarkable when we consider that He walked on water, healed a blind guy using mud pies, and fed more than five thousand people with just a little boy's "Happy Meal."

Keep in mind that Jesus also said if we have faith, we can move mountains instead of spending our days feeling crushed by them (see 1 Corinthians 13:2).

Take a second to participate with me in an experiment.

Choose a number in your head—any number you want. Go!

What number did you pick? Nearly every time I do this experiment with people, they tell me a number in the ballpark of one to one hundred.

But why?

Why would we pick a number between one and one hundred when we have the option of choosing any number in the world? Why would we not pick 1,284,383?

For many of us, it's a simple and sad answer: we've been programmed to focus on the small and the manageable. We do the same thing with spiritual matters. We focus on what's normal when God has promised He is "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20, NIV).

We all want our lives to count, to matter—and the good news is that God wants that for each one of us as well. The beginning of unleashing the life God wants for us is understanding that there is so much more in store for us than what we are currently experiencing.

Most of us haven't grasped the reality that the resurrected Son of God is dwelling inside us, and therefore we think too small when it

If we have faith, we can move mountains instead of spending our days feeling crushed by them.

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comes to the potential God has placed within us. But if we refuse to believe God has something greater in store for us, our chances of becoming unleashed and moving beyond normal are slim to none.

If our view of God is small and manageable—and *normal*—then we will have a small view of what He wants to do in and through us. But if the opposite is true—if we really grasp that God’s plan for us is so much bigger and so much more powerful than anything we can imagine—then we will begin to realize the truth in what the apostle Paul promises in Philippians 4:13: “I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”

God has called each one of us to embrace life, not merely to endure it. He wants us to have overwhelming victory (see Romans 8:37), to conquer sin and death (see 1 Corinthians 15:57), to not get tired of doing the right thing (see Galatians 6:9), and to make a difference rather than make excuses (see Acts 22:16).

But before we can start living this way, we have to understand two very important truths.

TRUTH #1:

Unleashing your life begins where you are right now.

No matter where you are in life—no matter what you’re doing now, what you’ve done in the past, or what has happened to you—you can begin immediately to take steps toward unleashing the life God has for you. You can start becoming the person God wants you to be rather than feel as if life always gets the best of you.

As we read about Jesus in the Gospels, one thing is clear: He always meets people where they are and then brings them to where they need to be. He never dives into someone’s life and immediately starts making religious demands.

When He called Peter, James, and John to follow Him, He didn’t give them a list of things they needed to start doing and

things they needed to stop doing. He simply invited them to lay down their nets and follow Him. When He called Matthew, a tax collector, to follow Him, He didn't lecture him on the evils of taxation and then tell him he needed a career change. He simply said, "Follow Me," and Matthew responded to the call.

Yes, our actions and habits change after we start following Christ, but that's not the starting point. It's as Jesus walks with us that He shows us who He is and what He wants.

In this book we'll be examining the life of a biblical hero named David. When we read the story of David, it's easy to focus on all the things he accomplished: his epic battle with Goliath, his incredible rise to the throne, his strategic plan for enlarging the borders of Israel. But in doing so, we often miss one of the most important pieces of his journey: the way he arrived on the scene in the first place.

Let's take a look at the first time David appears in the Bible:

The LORD said to Samuel, "You have mourned long enough for Saul. I have rejected him as king of Israel, so fill your flask with olive oil and go to Bethlehem. Find a man named Jesse who lives there, for I have selected one of his sons to be my king."

But Samuel asked, "How can I do that? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

"Take a heifer with you," the LORD replied, "and say that you have come to make a sacrifice to the LORD. Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you which of his sons to anoint for me."

So Samuel did as the LORD instructed. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town came trembling to meet him. "What's wrong?" they asked. "Do you come in peace?"

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“Yes,” Samuel replied. “I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then Samuel performed the purification rite for Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice, too.

When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Surely this is the LORD’s anointed!”

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “This is not the one the LORD has chosen.” Next Jesse summoned Shimea, but Samuel said, “Neither is this the one the LORD has chosen.” In the same way all seven of Jesse’s sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.” Then Samuel asked, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse replied. “But he’s out in the fields watching the sheep and goats.”

“Send for him at once,” Samuel said. “We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.”

So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes.

And the LORD said, “This is the one; anoint him.”

So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the flask of olive oil he had brought and anointed David with the oil. And the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah.

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

The point I find especially intriguing about this story is that David wasn't out looking to do something great. He woke up one morning, and everything was normal. But in the span of one day, the entire course of his life changed.

It's interesting to note that David wasn't doing the pursuing here; it's the Lord who was seeking out David. God knew that David's life was filled with tremendous potential—David just needed to be unleashed from taking care of sheep so he could transition to leading a nation of people.

After the encounter with God's prophet Samuel, David quickly realized that God had more in store for him than his ordinary circumstances seemed to imply. I imagine from that point on he began watching for the opportunities placed in front of him, although there was no way he could have dreamed all that God had in store.

The Lord was seeking to unleash David so he could do greater things than he ever could have imagined. The same is true for us.

I know what you are thinking: *Okay, Perry, if an old man who claims to be a prophet comes to my house, tells me he's from God, and pours oil over my head, then I'll accept that my life is supposed to be something different from what it is.* (Just my opinion—if that does happen, you might want to call the police.)

That sounds far-fetched, I know, but I believe the Lord has made His plans for us even more obvious than He did for David.

Let's take a look at one of the most powerful yet often unexplored verses in the Bible:

The Word became human and made his home among us.
He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have
seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

JOHN 1:14

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God has made Himself evident to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian (meaning you understand that sin separates you from God and only Jesus could make the payment to reconcile that relationship), then these things are true about you: (1) God has revealed Himself to you in the living, breathing form of Jesus; (2) He now lives in you; and (3) He really does desire greater things for your life.

Having an unleashed life is completely possible—right now, today. You don't have to get in position for it; God is ready to meet you right where you are.

Are you ready?

TRUTH #2:

Unleashing your life begins by understanding that God wants great things for His children.

I absolutely adore my daughter, Charisse. I used to be a really tough guy who enjoyed movies about car chases and things getting blown up. Now I'm pretty much content to sit on the couch with Charisse, watching the drama of Disney princesses and the adventures of Strawberry Shortcake unfold on our screen.

The Bible is clear that I'm far from being the perfect father (see Matthew 7:9-11), and that is so true. For instance, I have to admit there are times I've lied to my daughter. If you're a parent, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Charisse says she wants to play, but I've been playing all afternoon. And I am so tired. So I say, "I can't right now, baby. I have to go to the bathroom."

Truth be told, I don't have to go to the bathroom at all. It's just the only place where I can sit down to have a little peace and quiet. That is, until I see Charisse's tiny fingers waving at me under the door. "Daddy, are you done yet? Can we play?"

And so, because I love her, I gather up a little more energy and

head back to the living room for another tea party or a game of hide-and-seek. I may not be a perfect parent, but I definitely want good things for my daughter. I want her to know how much her daddy loves her.

I once told a friend there is nothing in the world I wouldn't do to hear my little girl laugh. I'm not talking about a giggle or a polite chuckle. I'm talking about the true belly laugh of a child—the kind that can come only as a result of pure joy flowing out of her.

My friend then posed to me one of the most life-changing questions I've ever been asked. "Perry," he said, "if that's how you feel about your daughter and you are what the Bible calls an imperfect father, then why would you ever think your heavenly Father would want anything less for you than for joy to overflow from your heart?"

He was right. God wants to hear us laugh. God is not after our begrudging submission. He is after our joy.

Earlier in this chapter we saw how David arrived on the scene and how God's calling transformed his life from normal to extraordinary. Now let's fast-forward to the end of David's life and note how he never lost sight of the great things God had done for him. Here are some of his last words:

**God wants to hear us
laugh. God is not after our
begrudging submission.
He is after our joy.**

David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly:

"O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, may you be praised forever and ever! Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O LORD, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is

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over all things. Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength.

“O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!”

1 CHRONICLES 29:10-13

In this passage David was preparing the people of Israel to give toward the building of the Temple. What's striking to me is that David didn't sound like he was doing a big fund-raising campaign here. Instead, the text is full of David's amazement at how great and awesome God is. David never forgot who he was or where God had brought him from, and he never lost sight of who God is.

The unleashing of our lives begins when we refuse to believe it's too late for us, when we reject the idea that we're too damaged for God to do anything with, when we stop being obsessed with ourselves. Instead, we must become obsessed with how great God is and how great His plans are for our lives.

The power of unleashing doesn't come when we ask, “What can I do?” The answer to that question always amounts to something that will eventually pass away. The better question is “Who is the Lord, and what does He want to do through me?”

Who are you, Lord?

The apostle Paul (formerly Saul) was another guy who got a pretty direct call to live an unleashed life. He was on his way to persecute Christians when Jesus Himself met him and knocked him flat on the ground. We see this life-changing encounter in Acts 9:3-6:

As [Saul] was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He

fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?”

“Who are you, lord?” Saul asked.

And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Paul went on to accomplish amazing things for God—including writing most of the books of the New Testament—and it all began when Jesus met him exactly where he was. Paul responded by asking the question all of us should ask: “Who are you, Lord?” That is essential, because we will never do what He wants us to do until we understand who He is.

Unleashing our lives is not about convincing God how great our plans are but rather about understanding that we can live the life God has planned for us—right now. It begins when we grasp that God is greater than we give Him credit for. He is after our joy, and ultimately He wants even greater things for us than we do.

God had great plans for David that day when He pulled him out of the sheep pen, and He had great plans for Saul when He knocked him flat on his back. He has great plans for us, as well. Once we see who He is, we will find it far easier to surrender to what He says.

Once we’ve shown up at the dance, we have a choice to make: are we going to stand against the wall, watching other people bust moves, or are we going to get out there on the dance floor ourselves?

God hasn’t called His people to stand along the wall as spectators. He wants us to participate with Him in what He is already doing in the world. The reality is that He has already made the

**We will never do what
Jesus wants us to do until
we understand who He is.**

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first move. He has introduced Himself and offered His hand to us, and now He's just waiting for us to discover who He is. As we see Him more clearly, we will trust Him more fully. We'll follow Him more intentionally. We'll live more completely and abundantly than ever before.

But before we can get there, we need to tackle a few of the common obstacles that hold us back from the full life in store for us.