

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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TODAY  
MATTERS

12 DAILY PRACTICES TO  
GUARANTEE TOMORROW'S SUCCESS

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## Letter From John C. Maxwell

Dear Friend,

Developing yourself and those around you is essential to make a great and lasting impact. The leader sees the big picture, but he or she needs other leaders to help make their mental picture a reality.

You and I are going to embark on a journey of personal growth. In this training course you will be challenged to take the many small steps that lead to success each and every day of your life. You'll learn principles that have been tested and proven again and again.

The time you spend with this material will prove to be a worthy investment. Your organization will benefit as you put these ideas into practice.

I have devoted my life to equipping people, and it is my hope that you will take the *Today Matters* training to heart by growing and developing others around you.

Your friend,



John C. Maxwell

# Introduction

This book is designed to emphasize what you should learn from the videos. As you watch the videos, take comprehensive notes in your workbook. Read *Today Matters* to gain an even deeper understanding of the principles being taught. In doing so, your understanding of this subject will grow.

After you have completed this book, it can serve as a helpful reference guide as you consider your responsibility as a leader/team member and how to improve as you function in that role. Approach this course with the knowledge that, upon completion, you have the knowledge to help make yourself into a better leader.

## How Does Today Impact Tomorrow's Success?

Everyone wants to have a good day, but not many people know what a good day looks like — much less how to create one. And even fewer people understand how *the way you live today impacts your tomorrow*. The root of the problem is that most people misunderstand success. For many of us, today falls to pieces because...

**1. We believe success is \_\_\_\_\_ — so we criticize it.**

Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck opened his best-selling book *The Road Less Traveled* with the words, "Life is difficult." He went on to say, "Most do not fully see this truth that life is difficult. Instead they moan more or less incessantly...about the enormity of their problems, their burdens, and their difficulties as if life were generally easy, as if life *should* be easy."

**2. We believe success is \_\_\_\_\_ — so we search for it.**

The problem is that we want the rewards of success without paying the price. Seth Godin, author of *Permission Marketing*, recently wrote about this problem in the business world. He believes that business leaders frequently look for quick fixes for their companies. But he admonishes that "we need to stop shopping for lightning bolts."

"You don't win an Olympic gold medal with a few weeks of intensive training," says Godin. "There's no such thing as an overnight opera sensation. Great law firms or design companies don't spring up overnight...Every great company, every great brand, and every great career has been built in exactly the same way: bit by bit, step by step, little by little." There is no magic solution to success.

**3. We believe success comes from \_\_\_\_\_ — so we hope for it.**

**4. We believe success is \_\_\_\_\_ — so we work for it.**

Success may not come to those who don't work hard, but hard work and success are not one and the same.

**5. We believe success comes from an \_\_\_\_\_ — so we wait for it.**

The truth is that people who do nothing more than wait for an opportunity won't be ready to capitalize on one if it *does* appear. As basketball legend John Wooden says, "When opportunity comes, it's too late to prepare."

**6. We believe success comes from \_\_\_\_\_ — so we power up for it.**

Some people associate success with power. Their viewpoint is reinforced by the words of powerful people like industrialist Andrew Carnegie, who asserted, "Success is the power with which to acquire whatever one demands of life without violating the rights of others." Many people take their view of success and power one step further, assuming that successful people have taken advantage of others to get where they are. So to get what they want, they look for an angle to exploit or for leverage over someone else.

**7. We believe success comes from \_\_\_\_\_ — so we network for it.**

Which do you think is more important for getting what you want in life: *what* you know or *who* you know? If you believe the answer is *who*, then you probably believe that success comes from connections.

**8. We believe success comes from \_\_\_\_\_ — so we strive for it.**

We often confuse the recognition of success as success!

**9. We believe success is an \_\_\_\_\_ — so we schedule it.**

We overestimate the \_\_\_\_\_. We underestimate the \_\_\_\_\_.

## How Does Today Impact Tomorrow's Success?...continued

### The Secret of Your Success Is Determined by Your Daily Agenda!

We over-\_\_\_\_\_ yesterday.

We \_\_\_\_\_ tomorrow.

Pulitzer prize-winning journalist William Allen White observed, "Multitudes of people have failed to live for today. They have spent their lives reaching for the future. What they have had within their grasp today they have missed entirely, because only the future has intrigued them...and the first thing they knew the future became the past."

We \_\_\_\_\_ today.

### The Lifebuilder's Creed

*Today is the most important day of my life.  
Yesterday with its successes and victories, struggles and failures  
is gone forever.  
The past is past.  
Done.  
Finished.*

*I cannot relive it. I cannot go back and change it.  
But I will learn from it and improve my Today.*

*Today. This moment. NOW.  
It is God's gift to me and it is all that I have.  
Tomorrow with all its joys and sorrows, triumphs and troubles isn't here yet.  
Indeed, tomorrow may never come.  
Therefore, I will not worry about tomorrow.*

*Today is what God has entrusted to me.  
It is all that I have. I will do my best in it.  
I will demonstrate the best of me in it—  
my character, giftedness and abilities—  
to my family and friends, clients and associates.*



*I will identify those things that are most important to do Today  
and those things I will do until they are done.  
And when this day is done  
I will look back with satisfaction at that which I have accomplished.  
Then, and only then, will I plan my tomorrow,  
Looking to improve upon Today, with God's help.  
  
Then I shall go to sleep in peace...content.*

There are only a handful of important decisions people need to make in their entire lifetimes. Does that surprise you? Most people overcomplicate life and get bogged down in decision-making. My goal has always been to make it as simple as possible. I've boiled the big decisions down to twelve things. Once I've made those decisions, all I have to do is manage how I'll follow through on them.

If you make decisions in those key areas once and for all — and then manage those decisions daily — you can create the kind of tomorrow you desire. ***Successful people make right decisions early and manage those decisions daily.*** The earlier you make those right decisions and the longer you manage them, the more successful you can become. The people who neglect to make those decisions and to manage them well often look back on their lives with pain and regret — no matter how much talent they possessed or how many opportunities they once had.

I must say to myself that I ruined myself, and that nobody great or small can be ruined except by his own hand. I am quite ready to say so. I am trying to say so, though they may not think it at the present moment. This pitiless indictment I bring without pity against myself. Terrible as was what the world did to me, what I did to myself was far more terrible still.

The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a FLANEUR, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the

## How Does Today Impact Tomorrow's Success?...continued

sphere of passion. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on.

I forgot that *every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetop.* I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility.

Benjamin Franklin rightly observed, "One today is worth two tomorrows; what I am to be, I am now becoming."

If you are proactive — you focus on \_\_\_\_\_ .

If you are reactive — you focus on \_\_\_\_\_ .

### Preparing...

- lets you focus on \_\_\_\_\_ .
- increases \_\_\_\_\_ .
- increases \_\_\_\_\_ .
- saves \_\_\_\_\_ .
- pays now for \_\_\_\_\_ .
- takes you to a \_\_\_\_\_ .

### Repairing...

- makes you focus on \_\_\_\_\_ .
- consumes \_\_\_\_\_ .
- breeds \_\_\_\_\_ .
- increases \_\_\_\_\_ .
- pays now for \_\_\_\_\_ .
- becomes an obstacle for \_\_\_\_\_ .

### Preparing Mode

Good Decisions - Daily Discipline = A Plan Without A \_\_\_\_\_

Daily Discipline - Good Decisions = Regimentation Without \_\_\_\_\_

Good Decisions + Daily Discipline = A Masterpiece Of \_\_\_\_\_

You begin to build a better life by determining to make good decisions, but that alone is not enough. You need to know *what* decisions to make. I've given the subject a lot of thought, talked to many successful people, and narrowed down the list of critical areas for success to twelve. I call them the **Daily Dozen**:

### The Daily Dozen

1. \_\_\_\_\_ — choose and display the right attitudes daily.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ — determine and act upon important priorities daily.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ — know and follow healthy guidelines daily.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ — communicate with and care for my family daily.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ — practice and develop good thinking daily.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ — make and keep proper commitments daily.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ — make and properly manage dollars daily.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ — deepen and live out my faith daily.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ — initiate and invest in solid relationships daily.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ — plan for and model generosity daily.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ — embrace and practice good values daily.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ — seek and experience improvements daily.

If you settle these twelve issues by making the right decision in each of these areas and then managing those decisions daily, you can be successful.

## How Does Today Impact Tomorrow's Success?...continued

### Let's Get Started!

1. Start with \_\_\_\_\_ .

*"Be the change you want to see in the world."*

— MAHATMA GANDHI

2. Start \_\_\_\_\_ .

3. Start \_\_\_\_\_ .

My friend Dick Biggs, author of *Burn Brightly Without Burning Out*, says, "The greatest gap in life is the one between knowing and doing." Deep down, we all know that if we want to change and grow, we need to get started. Yet we sometimes hesitate. That's why Maureen Falcone says, "Most people fail in the starting."

### So Stop Waiting...

*Until your car or home is paid off.*

*Until you get a new car or home.*

*Until your kids leave the house.*

*Until you go back to school.*

*Until you finish school.*

*Until you lose ten pounds.*

*Until you gain ten pounds.*

*Until you get married.*

*Until you get a divorce.*

*Until you have kids.*

*Until you retire.*

*Until summer.*

*Until spring.*

*Until winter.*

*Until fall.*

*Until you die.*

4. Start \_\_\_\_\_ .

In the remaining lessons you will become acquainted with my personal history and how I came to make each decision for practicing one of the daily dozen. I share it because I want to flesh out the process for you and to let you know that I'm trying to live out the principles I write about. And I'll tell you where I struggle — I'm not pretending that I do all this perfectly. But you'll also find that I had the good fortune to make many of these decisions early in life:

In my teens — 4 decisions

In my 20s — 5 decisions

In my 30s — 2 decisions

In my 50s — 1 decision

**The earlier I made the decision and consistently practiced the discipline, the greater the compounding effect on my life. The same will be true for you!**