

THE BIG IDEAS

Everything Is a Choice
Every.single.thing.

What Would You Do
If you knew you could not fail?

I'd Give My Whole Life
To be able to do that.

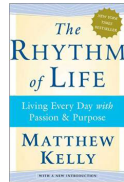
A Better Question
What is the *most* I can do?

Feeling Like It
Has nothing to do with it.

Befriend Silence
All the masters have.

Notes to Self
How can you make today amazing?

Passion, Belief
Commitment, courage,
perseverance.



The Rhythm of Life

Living Every Day *with* Passion and Purpose

BY MATTHEW KELLY · TOUCHSTONE © 1999 · 302 PAGES

“This is what I do know: You are capable of incredible things—things you have not even begun to imagine or believe in. Infinite possibilities are all around you, waiting to be explored, appreciated, grasped, and celebrated. You are using only a fraction of your potential . . . and that is a beautiful and exciting truth.

Every day you make hundreds of decisions. Some of those decisions help you become the-best-version-of-yourself, and others don't. Life is a choice. Become a great decision maker and you will master the art of living. With each decision, simply ask: What will help me to become the-best-version-of-myself? Make this a constant part of your inner dialogue and you will become a fabulous decision maker—and live a life uncommon.”

~ Matthew Kelly from *The Rhythm of Life*

The-best-version-of-yourself.

That is what [Matthew Kelly](#) is committed to helping us become and that is what this book is all about—becoming the-best-version-of-ourselves as we align with the rhythms of life.

The result? Living every day with passion and purpose.

I heard about Matthew from [Hal Elrod](#) in his great book, *The Morning Miracle* (see Notes). Hal raved about Matthew and shared some extraordinary quotes so I picked up a couple of books. Very glad I did!

The book is packed with wisdom. (Get it [here!](#)) My copy is, as you'd expect, all marked up. I'm excited to share some of my favorite Big Ideas so let's jump straight in!

EVERYTHING IS A CHOICE

“Everything is a choice.

This is life's greatest truth and its hardest lesson. It is a great truth because it reminds us of our power. Not power over others, but the often untapped power to be ourselves and to live the life we have imagined.

It is a hard lesson, because it causes us to realize we have chosen the life we are living right now. It is perhaps frightening for us to think that we have chosen to live our life exactly as it is today. Frightening because we may not like what we find when we look at our lives today. But it is also liberating, because we can now begin to choose what we will find when we look at our life in the tomorrows that lie un-lived before us.

What will you see when you look at your life ten years from now? What will you choose?”

Everything is a choice.

But only every.single.thing.

“Whether you are sixteen or sixty, the rest of your life is ahead of you. You cannot change one moment of your past, but you can change your whole future. Now is your time.”

~ Matthew Kelly

" Learn to master the moment of decision and you will live a life uncommon."

~ Matthew Kelly

Moment to moment we CHOOSE our destiny.

What are you choosing?!

We can choose to step forward into growth—expressing what Matthew calls the-best-version-of-yourself, or we can choose to step back into our addictive behaviors which would be, of course, the not-so-great-version-of-yourself.

Moment to moment to moment.

We make a decision.

Will we express the highest version of ourselves? Or not?

That's Part 1 of this Big Idea.

Part 2: Fast-forward ten years. Look at your life. What do you see?

Is it what you'd *like* to see?

Imagine THE most amazing possible vision for your future.

Take a moment to bring a picture to mind. What does your life look like?

...

Now, KNOW that you are creating that destiny every.single.moment.

We are *constantly* making little decisions. As Matthew tells us, with each decision, simply ask: *What will help me to become the-best-version-of-myself?*

Then do THAT!

And you will create a life beyond your wildest imagination.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU KNEW YOU COULDN'T FAIL?

"The great people of history remove all limitation from their dreams, and once they establish their dream, they seek it with unrelenting energy."

~ Matthew Kelly

"I will never forget a question I once heard Robert Schuller pose in an interview with Larry King. They were discussing the effects of the fear of failure on our decision-making process, and Schuller offered this question as a guide: "What would you attempt if you knew you could not fail?"

Do not be afraid to dream. Perhaps your fear is of failure. There is no shame in trying to attempt mighty things and failing. The shame is in failing to attempt those things. Michelangelo, the great Renaissance artist and poet, knew the value, power, and need for dreams when he wrote, "The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

So...

What would YOU attempt if you knew you could not fail?

In *Daring Greatly* (see Notes), [Brené Brown](#) shares this little story: "I took a deep breath and recited my vulnerability prayer as I waited my turn: Give me the courage to show up and let myself be seen. Then, seconds before I was introduced, I thought about a paperweight on my desk that reads, "What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?" I pushed that question out of my head to make room for a new question. As I walked up to the stage, I literally whispered aloud, "What's worth doing even if I fail?"

What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?

And... What's worth doing *even if* you fail?!

Just because we dare to attempt it doesn't mean we're sure to succeed. So, what is worth doing EVEN IF you failed?!

"This is the great modern paradox: We know the things that make us happy; we just don't do them."

~ Matthew Kelly

Remember: It's all about the baby steps and baby decisions you make in pursuit of that dream. With each step on your hero's journey, let this be your guiding question: *What will help me to become the-best-version-of-myself?*

I'D GIVE MY WHOLE LIFE TO BE ABLE TO DO THAT

"Itzhak Perlman is one of the finest violinists alive today. Several years ago, Perlman agreed to attend a charity reception after one of his concerts in Vienna. Tickets for the champagne reception were sold for the equivalent of five hundred American dollars per guest.

At the reception, while the guests mingled, Izhak Perlman stood in a roped-off area flanked by security guards. One by one the guests were led into the roped-off area and introduced to Perlman. As one man entered the roped-off area, he stretched out his hand, shook hands with the violinist, and said, "Mr. Perlman, you were phenomenal tonight. Absolutely amazing." Perlman smiled and thanked the man graciously for the compliment. The man continued, "All my life I have had a great love of the violin, and I have heard every great living violinist, but I have never heard anyone play the violin as brilliantly as you did tonight." Perlman smiled again but said nothing, and the man continued, "You know, Mr. Perlman, I would give my whole life to be able to play the violin like you did tonight."

Perlman smiled once more and said, "I have."

—> *"I have."*

What an amazing story.

Matthew shares the backstory to Perlman's discipline. Guess how much he practices?

9 hours. EVERY day. Unless he's performing, then it's just the 4.5 hour morning session before deep preparation for that night's performance. (Want to be awed? Watch [this](#).)

What are *you* willing to give your life to?

Let's get on that.

QUESTION FOR ASPIRING HEROES

"They are the leaders, heroes, legends, champions, and saints. They didn't ask themselves, "What is the least I can do?" and then proceed to lead dispassionate, boring lives of misery and dissatisfaction. Rather, they asked themselves, "What is the most I can do?" With the vision inspired by this question, they then set out to do the most they can do. Not merely activity, but activity driven by a deep sense of purpose. They did the most they could to the best of their abilities in a single lifetime..."

Somewhere right now, someone is training for the next Olympic games. Can you imagine an Olympic athlete asking herself, "What is the least I can do and still win the gold medal?" Champions don't take shortcuts. Champions give everything they have to training, preparation, and competition. That is what makes them champions."

What is the MOST you can do?

vs.

What is the *least* you can do?

Which question do YOU think leads to greatness and a deep sense of fulfillment?

Exactly.

And, most importantly, which question are *you* asking yourself these days?

Here's to serving *profoundly* and consistently choosing to express the-best-version-of-ourselves!

"Have you ever given your best, your all, to anything? What do you think would happen if you did?"

~ Matthew Kelly

*"Your character is your destiny.
Building character is a task only
for the brave and dedicated."*

~ Matthew Kelly

WHAT DOES FEELING LIKE IT HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

"Do Andre Agassi and Serena Williams hit tennis balls only when they feel like it? Did Bill Gates achieve what he has by sleeping in until one o'clock in the afternoon? Does Emmitt Smith show up to practice only when he is in the mood for it? Did Abraham Lincoln do only the things he felt like doing? Do you think Mother Teresa always felt like taking care of the poorest of the poor?"

One thing is certain. If you do only what you feel like doing, your life will be miserable and you will be a failure."

Well that's a pretty direct way to put it. Hah.

Note to self: *"If you do only what you feel like doing, your life will be miserable and you will be a failure."*

Period.

Any questions? :)

[Michael Beckwith](#) and [David Reynolds](#) echo this wisdom.

Beckwith (see Notes on [Spiritual Liberation](#)) tells us: *"The gift of self-discipline is that it has the power to take you beyond the reasoning of temporary emotion to freedom. Think of how empowered you've felt on occasions when you haven't given in to the 'I don't feel like it' syndrome and honored your commitment to yourself. What does not feeling like it have to do with it? The combination of love for something with the willingness to do what it takes to practice it—discipline—results in freedom."*

That's one of my favorite lines in all these Notes: *"What does ***not feeling like it*** have to do with it?"*

You decided it was important. So, DO IT.

[David Reynolds](#) (see Notes on [Constructive Living](#)) tells us: *"The mature human being goes about doing what needs to be done regardless of whether that person feels great or terrible. Knowing that you are the kind of person with that kind of self-control brings all the satisfaction and confidence you will ever need. Even on days when the satisfaction and confidence just aren't there, you can get the job done anyway."*

BEFRIEND SILENCE

*"The meaning and purpose of
life is for you to be the
best-version-of-yourself."*

~ Matthew Kelly

"Everything great in history has arisen from silence . . . even great noise. Beethoven and Mozart closed themselves off from the world and inhabited silent rooms for days at a time in order to hear things that no one else could hear—sounds so glorious that they themselves would never hear in the midst of the world, and yet sounds that the world would never know if Beethoven and Mozart had not befriended silence.

Befriend silence. I am not suggesting that you spend four, five, six hours a day in silence. Drop by a church during the day when it is empty and quiet. Find a quiet corner and a comfortable chair at home. Leave the radio off in the car on the way to work. Have a television-free evening once a week. Try it. It works."

Silence.

It's incredibly important.

There's simply no way (!) we're going to attune to the rhythms of life if we don't slow down and create some space for silence.

[Joseph Campbell](#) (see Notes on [The Power of Myth](#)) echoes this wisdom: *"This is an absolute necessity for anybody today. You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, where you*

*"Discipline yourself to do it.
Every disciplined effort has
its own multiple rewards."*

~ Matthew Kelly

don't know what was in the newspapers this morning, you don't know who your friends are, you don't know what you owe anybody, you don't know what anybody owes you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you might find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen."

So does [Stephen King](#).

Yah, *that* Stephen King—the guy who's sold 350 million books.

He says that when he first started his career and was teaching, at the end of the week he felt like he had JUMPER CABLES attached to his brain.

Imagine that.

Jumper cables on your brain.

That's basically what we're doing to ourselves when we CONSTANTLY have the TV on at home (in every room!). The radio on in the car. The iPod cranking during every workout.

Always blowing our brains up with stimulation.

We need to turn that noise off. Enter silence. *That's* where the magic is.

As Matthew says, you don't need to go for 4 or 5 or 6 hours a day. But you *can* take some baby steps! Turn off the radio on the way to work perhaps? Leave the TV off for (gasp!) one night per week. He recommends we carve out an hour a day for silence. (<— very good idea!)

Let's remove the jumper cables from our brains—connecting to something bigger than ourselves and allowing the silence to do its work!

NOTES TO SELF

*"You cannot live without
dreams. Dreams foster
hope, and hope is one of the
forces by which men and
women live."*

~ Matthew Kelly

"I searched for practical ways to center my lifestyle on my life principle. This question became my touchstone: "What will it take today for me to become the better person I know I can be?"

The first thing I did was write this question down on a blank piece of paper and stick it on the wall next to my bed. I did this because I wanted that question to be the first thing I saw each day. I wanted it to be the first thing I saw each day because I wanted it to become the theme of my day."

"What will it take today for me to become the better person I know I can be?"

After writing that question on a piece of paper and sticking on the wall by his bed, Matthew proceeded to put that question pretty much *everywhere*—on his bathroom mirror, in his closet, on his desk, in his car.

He put it EVERYWHERE.

Why?

Because he wanted to be reminded of that question every hour of every day.

Why?

Because, as he says, *"That is how the legends, heroes, champions, leaders and saints achieved all they did."*

With a single-minded focus on making TODAY a masterpiece. Aligning their next tiny action (and thought) with their commitment to being the-best-possible-version-of-themselves.

I love it. Question for YOU: *"What will it take today for you to become the better person you know you can be?"*

PASSION, BELIEF, COMMITMENT, COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE.

"Your future is forged and your actions determined by your dominant thoughts."

~ Matthew Kelly

"What is it that sets men and women of great achievement apart from the rest of humanity? What do Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Warren Buffet, Albert Einstein, John Quincy Adams, Ronald Reagan, Charlie Chaplan, Michael Jordan, Leonardo da Vinci, Beethoven, Mother Teresa, and Billy Graham all have in common? What empowers them to touch and affect so many lives? What allows them to grasp success and reach levels of achievement that for most people are simply unfathomable?

Passion. They are passionate about what they do. Belief. They believe in what they do. Courage. In the face of situations where other people would lose heart, they take heart. Perseverance. Through the discouragement of failure, rejection, and criticism, they persevere and keep at it, always staying focused on their goal and dream.

Passion, belief, commitment, courage and perseverance.

And so it will be with your life. There will be tough times—there are for everyone. There will be times of fear and trembling. There will be times of discouragement and disillusionment. Have courage, smile, keep your chin up, laugh often, be kind to yourself, stay focused, be gracious and appreciative, think happy thoughts, and carry on regardless."

Amen. (That's worth a re-read.)

What is it that sets great people apart?

Passion, belief, commitment, courage and perseverance.

Here's to cultivating ours day in and day out as we give our greatest gifts in greatest service to our families and to the world!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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[The Power of Myth](#)

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About the Author of "The Rhythm of Life"

MATTHEW KELLY



Matthew Kelly has dedicated his life to helping people and organizations become the-best-version-of-themselves! Born in Sydney, Australia, he began speaking and writing in his late teens while he was attending business school. Since that time, four million people have attended his seminars and presentations in more than fifty countries. Learn more + connect: www.matthewkelly.com.

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.