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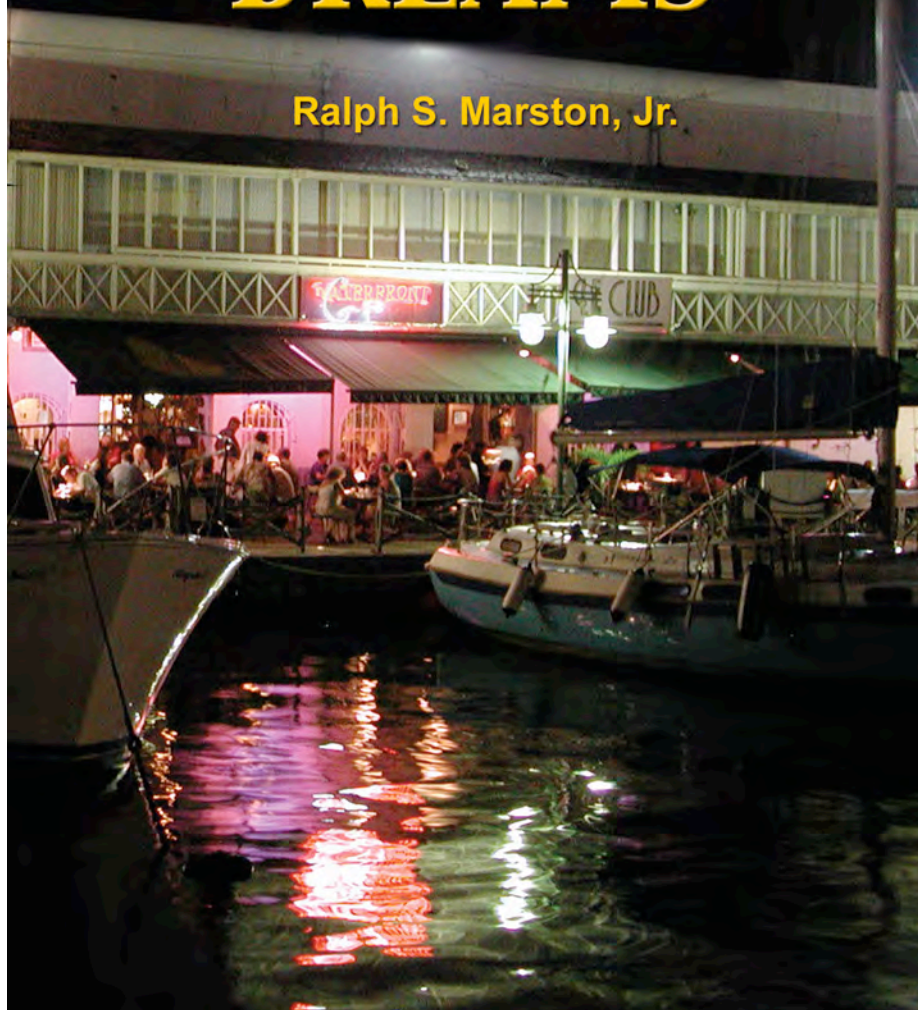
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# THE POWER OF TEN BILLION DREAMS

Ralph S. Marston, Jr.



# The Power of Ten Billion Dreams

by

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Austin, Texas

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*For all who dream.*

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# Your Dream

*Nothing happens unless first a dream.*

— Carl Sandburg

You have a dream for your life.

Maybe you know precisely what that dream is, or maybe you don't even know it's there. Nonetheless, you have a dream for your life, a vision of experiencing life in a way that is magnificently rich and uniquely fulfilling. Have you seen that dream lately? Or have you been burying it by keeping yourself busy tending to your doubts, your fears and your insecurities? Have you ever allowed yourself to touch the dream you have for your life, to really get to know it?

You are wealthy beyond anything you can imagine.

That wealth is not based on what's in your bank account or stock portfolio, though you can absolutely make use of it to put as much money in the bank as you wish. Your real wealth is not dependent on the make and model of your car, or the size of your house, or on how much stuff you have it filled with. The truly important wealth in your life flows from your own uniqueness. The real richness in your life can be found in the authentic dreams you have for how life can be.

You have a dream that will make your life endlessly fulfilling. Would you like to find it? Would you like to live it?

Maybe you've been thinking about it. Perhaps you've been planning to get around to it, after you lose weight, or as soon as you find a better job, or once you get a little money saved up. Yes, you regret the time you've already wasted but after all, you've been busy just getting by.

Whatever has happened before, is over and done with. Today you have the opportunity to choose how you will move forward. The best option, for yourself and for the whole world, is to live your dreams, beginning immediately. Now you can

choose to be who you know, at your deepest and most authentic level, you are meant to be.

Can you feel your purpose? Of course you can. In every like and dislike, in every preference, in every frustration, in every annoyance, in every joy and curiosity and area of interest, in every fascination, are pointers to your purpose. Indeed, you feel it all the time. What does your purpose feel like? It feels like you. It's not who you imagine that other people think you should be. It's who you really are. Your purpose is what you are born to be.

Do you have any brothers or sisters? Are any of them exactly the same as you? Of course not, even though they share your genetics and your upbringing. If those things dictate who you are, then there should be no difference at all between you and your siblings. The fact is, who you are is much more profound than the cells you're made of and the experiences you've been through. Who you are, is you. And what you are meant to do, is live your dream.

That, by the way, is not easy. If you're looking for easy, you can stop right here. If you're looking for someone to give you a secret technique to create happiness and richness without any effort, you won't find it here. There are plenty of people who will promise you that kind of thing, and lots of them will ask you to pay them handsomely for the privilege, but none of them can deliver it to you. Even if they could, you wouldn't want it, not really. Because their pre-packaged vision of happiness, and the things they promise, are not the things that will make you happy. In fact, no *things* will make you happy. You will be happy when you let your *self* be happy. No, that's not a typo. Your self is not quite the same as yourself. Your true self is the part of you that's left when your ego falls away.

If you were told you only had six months to live, your priorities would change drastically. You would completely discard the priorities of your ego. You would live from the perspective of your true self. That true self knows what's really important to you. Your true self knows how to be happy, and it's not by getting things. It's by living your purpose. It's by living your dreams.

But isn't that selfish, to follow your own self-interest? Isn't



it unfair to others when you focus your life around your own dreams?

You feel connected to all that is, and there is great truth in that feeling. From your sense of connectedness comes compassion for others and an appreciation of the whole environment in which you live. Some of your most beautiful desires are your desires to be of service to others and to be a loving, caring steward of the magnificent universe that is your home. Those altruistic desires can make the dreams you carry for your own life seem shallow and selfish by comparison. Be assured, they are not.

On the contrary, it is by following your own unique dreams that you enable and encourage and empower the dreams of others. It is by making purposeful use of the material abundance in the universe that you ensure the sustained viability and integrity of that abundance.

Very likely, the hardest part of living your dreams is making the solid commitment to do so. That commitment hinges on opening yourself to your real, true dreams, and avoiding the temptation to give lip service to the second-hand, superficial, borrowed dreams of others, some of which are not really dreams to begin with. The difficult part is opening up to your dreams. Once you do that, fully and unequivocally, something magical happens. Though in your day-to-day activities there may not even be any noticeable difference, those activities soon begin to yield dramatically different results. What was once tedious, becomes fulfilling. What was once futile, becomes highly effective.

This all depends on you buying into the concept that living your dream is the highest and best use of your life. At this point, you may think that sounds about right. But if you are letting doubt, fear, anxiety or apathy hold you back, then you're not there yet. You'll never be completely fulfilled and satisfied with your life, and that's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing because it always provides you with new ways to make life meaningful. But even though you will never be completely satisfied with where you are, you can be completely satisfied with where you're headed. If that sounds good, keep reading.

Millions of people have found my writing to be helpful. But

the thing is, I don't care whether you like this book or not. I'm not writing it for you, though if my past work is any indication there's a good chance you'll get a lot of great value from it. Here's the truth, though. I'm writing this book for me.

I'm writing it for me because I know that's precisely what will make it the best it can be. And not coincidentally, by doing so I'm illustrating a powerful point, the one I touched on a few paragraphs ago. By following my dreams I'm enabling and encouraging many others to follow their dreams. By following my own dreams, the dreams that resonate with my true self, I'm contributing to life at my highest possible level of effectiveness, and the value of that will go far beyond me.

My biggest, most compelling dream is to live in a world filled with people who live their dreams. This is your invitation to join me there.

The big problem of our age is not massive financial debt. The big problem is not terrorism or greed or tyranny. Those are difficult situations, yet they are mere symptoms of the real problem. The defining problem of our time is not scarcity. On the contrary, it is firmly rooted in overwhelming abundance.

Our big problem is that we think we've become too rich or too sophisticated, too busy or too important, and in many cases way too comfortable, to dream. In our dearth of dreaming we have made ourselves tragically poor. It is a poverty imposed upon each of us not by outside forces but by inner doubts and fears. It is a poverty that is logically unnecessary and yet stubbornly persistent.

There is a way out. It is simple, and yet it can also be enormously difficult. The way forward, the way beyond the biggest problem we face, is to dream. Not a mass, collective dream imposed by an elite group of intellectuals, but a massive collection of individual dreams bubbling up from completely ordinary people with an extraordinary array of perspectives.

The way ahead is for each of us to dream, to really, truly, authentically dream big, meaningful, and outrageous dreams, and then to bring those dreams to life on an entirely personal level. That's the way we've always forged ahead. Now, it is an even more valuable and accessible option. Yet all too often, too many of us are reluctant to make use of it.

Why do we avoid our dreams? The reasons are many, but the reasons don't matter. What matters is that the disregard of dreams is a terminal illness, threatening the very existence of the beautiful and vital body of civilization we've built and nurtured for so long. What truly matter are the very real and unimaginably powerful dreams that live within us, constantly begging and pleading with us to give them light and life.

What do you perceive as the problems in your life? Do you fear you don't have enough of something, like money, or time? Does it seem that the world has passed you by, rendering you irrelevant and virtually alone? Is there some existential challenge, such as a serious health concern or career crisis or dysfunctional relationship that has drained the hope completely out of you? Are you deeply troubled by the constant tectonic churning of political, environmental and economic landscapes?

Whatever manifestation your troubles take, have you ever wondered why they have the power to trouble you in the first place? What is it within you that feels so mortally threatened?

Listen very carefully, and hear the gentle gurgling of a mountain stream. It is early summer, and up above the timberline the snowpack slowly melts, sending a cool, clear, refreshing fount of water coursing over the smooth stones in the stream bed beside you. High in the deep blue sky, the sun casts its brilliance over the whole vista and gently warms your skin. Breathe in the fresh, cool air and listen again, even more carefully. Other than the sound of water in the stream, you hear only peace itself.

Can you imagine such a scene? It feels great to do so. Why does it feel so good? Because you're not just some machine that goes to work and then transports a paycheck to the bank every two weeks. You care deeply about life's beauty. You're not just a piece of meat through which persistent genes provide for their own survival and propagation. You are you. You are awareness itself. You are the beauty and peace that you love so much. You are life experiencing life in a way that it has never been experienced before. In this very moment, through your eyes, the whole universe focuses on its own best possibilities in an entirely unique way.

Your urge to live and to experience is not just some biological or mechanical phenomenon. For at your best, you are a dreamer. The sweet, affirming feeling of fulfillment is the feeling of bringing dreams to life. In the dreaming and living of those dreams is an endless source of magnificent power. You have direct, intimate access to that power.

The real dreams are not those planted in you by clever marketing tactics. Your authentic dreams come from the ineffable substance of who you are. But you are not alone. You live in a world filled with billions of other people who also dream. Though each of those billions of dreams is unique and valuable in its own right, all of them are nonetheless connected. For every dream is made possible by the overriding dream of living a life that matters.

Do you want to change the world? Of course you do. After all, you're alive. And life, by its very definition, is a constant state of change. Because you are alive, you are changing the world all the time. Your desire to live is inseparable from a desire to change the world. For life is change, and meaningful, purposeful change is life. There's even more to it than that. Not only do you change the world by your living presence in it, you have an agenda for doing so. You have within you a vision of how you would like life to be. You have within you a desire to move the reality of your life and your world in the direction of that vision. From that vision, your dreams take shape.

Dreams are difficult. They're not necessarily physically or even mentally difficult, not nearly as much as they used to be. The dreamers who came before us have already figured out most of that stuff. If my great grandfather needed to carry 300 pounds of firewood from one place to another he would have faced a major challenge that might have taken him several days to complete. Today, when I need 300 pounds of compost for the garden I just hop in my Chevy Silverado pickup truck and drive over to Home Depot.

Dreams are no longer physically or mentally difficult. Yet now, dreams are more emotionally difficult. The biggest challenges in following an authentic dream are in clearly knowing what it is and in allowing it to consume your focus. Dreams are extremely demanding. They ask you to open yourself com-

pletely. And that almost always goes against your inclination.

But dreams are crucial. If we don't dream, we begin to fear loss. If we don't dream about what we can create, we fight over the dwindling artifacts from dreams that have already been fulfilled. If we don't dream, our lives run out of value.

Dreams will wake you up at three in the morning, and I'm not referring to nightmares. Dreams are serious, yet they're also a whole lot of fun. And dreams can absolutely change the world, even the little ones.

# My Little Dream

*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.*

— Mark Twain

On the Caribbean island of Barbados is a wonderful place called the Waterfront Café. It's a restaurant that sits right on the Careenage, which is a marina filled with beautiful yachts in the middle of the capital city of Bridgetown. In addition to delightful seafood and other Caribbean dishes, inside the Waterfront Café you'll find live jazz music on most evenings. Or you may choose to sit at a table outside, and enjoy a view of the Barbados parliament building and clock tower across the small harbor.

I have a dream of traveling to the Waterfront Café, to sip a mojito while enjoying Bajan fish cakes and shrimp in coconut curry sauce, with a live jazz band setting the mood. But the substance of my dream is not really about having dinner at a particular restaurant, as delightful as that may be. My dream is all about how I will get there. Because not only do I intend to dine at the Waterfront Café in Barbados, I intend to request a table outside so I can keep an eye on a boat in the harbor. My boat. A sailing yacht. The one I will sail there from Corpus Christi, Texas.

It is not the being there in Barbados that makes up the substance of my dream. It is the getting there. I've loved to sail since before I was in college. I've loved traveling to the islands of the Caribbean almost as long. Some of the best days I've ever experienced were spent sailing in the Caribbean and elsewhere. I've never undertaken a sailing journey that's anywhere near this ambitious, but I've always fantasized about it. Now that fantasy has been crystallized into a very specific dream. It feels completely right. It feels powerful. In fact, it feels so powerful that it has given me a whole new apprecia-

tion for the power of dreams.

And that's what this book is about—the power of dreams. Just one single dream can be immensely powerful. In fact, just one dream can change the world. But the thing is, I don't have just one dream. My dream of sailing from Corpus Christi to Barbados is a relatively small dream. That's why I refer to it here as my little dream. Yet even a little dream has the power to change the world, as we shall explore in these pages. That's because dreams do not exist in a vacuum. They build upon and interact with other dreams, and the resulting synergy moves all of life forward. I have my little dream plus many others. You have dreams, too, and so does everybody else. In those dreams, in the combined power of all those unique, personal, individual dreams, is the power to move life to a higher level for every person in the world—the power of ten billion dreams.

Perhaps you find my little dream interesting, or perhaps you don't. Maybe you're so captivated by it that you beg me to bring you along. Or, you may think it is entirely frivolous and a waste of time. Perhaps you've sailed a small boat all the way across the Pacific Ocean and you consider my plans of merely traversing the Gulf of Mexico and hopping through the Lesser Antilles to be no big deal. Or maybe you've never even seen the ocean and it's difficult for you to imagine going across it, not to mention in a small boat. Yet whatever you may think of my dream, it is indeed my dream (one of many), and it is authentic. It is something that I am passionate about and that I fully intend to accomplish because of the way I know the experience will make me feel, and because of the way it already makes me feel even though I have not completed it yet.

And whether you resonate with my dream or not, it has value to you. Even if you think that my dream is completely frivolous and hopelessly self-serving, it still has value to you and to a whole lot of other people. Because the value that I create in the process of achieving that dream will go far, far beyond me and my little dream. A significant part of that value you are holding in your hands right now, for this book is a direct result of my dream of sailing to Barbados.

For a long time I've been meaning to write another book. My previous book was published almost six years ago. And al-

though I had done a lot of writing on another book since that time, it was lacking something. There was nothing to tie it all together. Then one cool fall evening, I wanted to sit outside and read a book in the new lawn chair my wife had given me. So I went to the bookshelf intending to get an old favorite book about economics. But another book caught my eye, a book about long sea voyages in small boats. Years ago I had been a member of a sailing book club, and that particular book had been one of the monthly selections. I had never read it, so I decided that night it was about time to do so.

Sitting out on the deck in the cool night air, I began to reacquaint myself with my passion for sailing. The more I read about the adventures of others, the more I wanted to be out on the ocean myself. I began to think about my own sailing adventures, most of which were long ago, before life was so complicated and busy. And then it hit me. It was time to go sailing again, and not really for the enjoyment of it but for the challenge and the sense of accomplishment. Well, ok, for the enjoyment too! I immediately thought about Barbados. It's a beautiful place, and there's something there that resonates with my spirit. It's a place where I love to spend time. And it's far enough away to present a real and exhilarating challenge. Suddenly, the dream was born. A sailing adventure from Texas to Barbados! The more I thought about it, the more I realized it was meant to be. But I didn't just realize it on an intellectual level. I felt it, and that feeling has been growing ever since. Now, more than ever, I feel it is meant to be and I am already working diligently to bring it about.

But formulating my dream was just the beginning. The next day, on my morning walk, I was thinking about that freshly-minted dream. In particular, I was thinking about how quickly and powerfully it had energized me, and improved my whole attitude toward life. I was literally feeling the immense power of an authentic dream growing within me, the power of my own dream. I knew without a doubt that it was real, and I knew without a doubt that I would make it happen. And then I had another epiphany. I realized what I was doing. Dreams—the power of dreams! That's what would tie my book together! Without fully understanding it over the last few years, that



was precisely the theme of what I had been writing about in all the writing I had done for the book.

Although I feel tremendously blessed to have already achieved many dreams in my life, the dream I've chosen to share in this book is one that has not yet been fully realized. The value of a dream begins the moment you first feel it, and it can grow steadily each day until the dream is realized. The dream of sailing my own boat to Barbados already has given my life incredible new energy, and I have only just begun to work on it. By sharing that fresh, new dream and by expressing its energy through the words in this book, my intention is to inspire you to jump right into your very own dreams, right now, and to immediately begin experiencing the benefits of their positive power.

There are so very many problems in our world today, to the extent that they seem absolutely overwhelming most of the time. All sorts of well-meaning people dedicate themselves to solving those problems, and yet it seems to be a Sisyphean task. The solution to one problem creates other problems, and still other problems grow more onerous at the same time.

But there is something much stronger than the power of a problem, and that is the power of a dream. Throughout the ages, dreams built upon dreams have lifted us so high that we're in the fortunate position of not even realizing how good we have it. Yes, there are problems, but most of those problems are just plain trivial when compared to the challenges faced by the first humans. Our ancestors faced mortal challenges on a daily basis. Many of them spent nearly every moment in the survival mode. Even so, some of them had a little bit of time and energy to dream. Some of them acted on their dreams, and made a little bit of progress. Generation after generation of successive dreaming has brought us from dreaming of a warm place to spend the night to the point where we can now dream about such things as crossing the ocean in a sailing yacht or even flying into outer space. There is no limit to the power of dreams.

However, there are very real limitations that do prevent dreams from being realized. Those are the limitations we put on our own dreams, both individually and collectively. All too

often, we tend to discount our dreams or ignore them altogether. And when that happens, a negative momentum takes hold and the richness of life begins to fade away.

If you're driving your car, and it is running very low on gas, and there's a gas station up ahead, what do you do? That's easy—you pull into the gas station and fill up your tank, of course. You'd be crazy to speed on past the gas station. Ignoring your dreams is like driving on past that gas station, even as the "low fuel" warning chime is sounding in your ears. Without a meaningful and compelling dream, life quickly runs out of energy. That happens not only on an individual basis, but throughout society. It's when people stop dreaming that the problems start arising.

Are the passion and energy in your life in fact running low right now? Are you perhaps feeling tired of the drudgery of just getting by? Are you tired of having to make do with the limited options that are available to you each day? Or have you actually gone past being tired, to the point where you're really fearful about the fact that your life seems to be going nowhere? Are you aching to feel fulfillment, not just every now and then, but in every single moment, on every day of your life? Do you wish to feel that sweet sense that all is right with life, no matter where you are and what you are doing?

Have you had enough of making compromises? Are you fed up with being frustrated by the foolishness and incompetence you encounter in the world around you? Do you want to be able to do work that is meaningful and rewarding? Are you weary from being frightened, from all your worrying about what tomorrow will bring? Are you sick of the anxiety that comes from living in a world where so many of the things that affect you are out of your control? Are you tired of feeling irrelevant, and confused by the complexity of life?

Are you ready to truly live, to see life's beauty in every direction? Are you ready to take action and to get real, meaningful, valuable, rewarding results from that action?

Then it's time for you to dream, and to truly live that dream. It's time to reach deep within yourself and grab a big handful of real, authentic purpose, and use that purpose to fashion an irrepressible dream for yourself. What's most im-

portant is that the dream is truly yours, something that, once you realize what it is, you absolutely know you cannot be without it. It doesn't matter if other people see that dream as silly, or worthless, or selfish, or too ambitious, or not ambitious enough, or whatever. What really counts is that it is authentically yours. What really counts is that it is something you truly want to do.

Many people see dreams as frivolous, particularly in times of economic uncertainty. That makes sense of course, and is very logical reasoning. But in fact, the truth is the other way around. In difficult times, dreams are more important than ever. A lot of people see dreams as selfish, and think that it is much more compassionate to focus on helping others than it is to focus on one's own dreams. That's completely reasonable and understandable. After all, compassion is a beautiful thing and is essential to our civilization. Within each of us is an impulse to help others, and we can all be much more successful when working together than when fighting against each other. Yet if you wish to be compassionate, what is the best way to do that? If you ignore and deny your own dreams, does that put you in a better position to be of service to others? Actually, as we will discover, it doesn't. Because in order to give of yourself to others, you must have something to give. It is through living your dreams, whatever they may be, that you create real value in your life and in your world, value that you can offer to others in great abundance. If, on the other hand, you suppress your own dreams in the interest of helping others, all you're doing is reducing the amount of value that you have to work with. Nobody benefits from that. In fact, it hurts us all.

I readily admit that my dream of sailing to Barbados is highly self-serving. After all, it involves sailing through the beautiful, warm islands of the Caribbean and generally having a very good time at it. On the surface, it would seem that a more responsible and compassionate dream would be to provide loving foster homes for troubled youth, or to provide clean water to villagers in Africa, or mosquito nets to people in areas prone to malaria. These are great causes, by the way, and I'm happy to be able to support them along with other good causes. Plus, I do have other dreams that are not so

blatantly self-serving as my dream to sail to Barbados. One of those dreams is a passionate desire to encourage others to dream, which is what I seek to do with this book. Yet I have chosen to share my sailing dream with you precisely because it is not a “save-the-world” type of dream, precisely because it appears, on the surface, to be so self-serving. My intention is to illustrate a powerful point. It’s a point that, when you truly get it, can profoundly change your life and can in fact enable you to change the whole world for the better. By introducing you to my little dream, and by considering all the wonderful and valuable things that dream sets in motion, I intend to install within you a beautiful and powerful certainty, which is this:

Any dream, as long as it is positive and authentic, serves to move the whole world forward. Even if the dream is not, on the surface, about doing good things for others, it will nevertheless end up being of great value to all.

I know that may be difficult to believe. I completely understand if you have doubts. My job is to erase those doubts. My job is not merely to get you to believe the statement above, but to get you to the point where you know it without even the possibility of doubt, where you don’t have to take my word for it. My purpose, with this book, is to set you free to dream, so that the immense value within you is expressed in ways that benefit the whole world.

Each person in this world is a unique individual, with his or her own special set of desires and dreams. The world desperately cries out for all those dreams and the creative, productive power they can inspire. Unfortunately, far too many dreams have been destroyed by self-criticism or by the judgments of others. And when that happens, real, authentic dreams can be replaced by borrowed dreams, or worse. Those borrowed dreams are just cheap imitations, though, and they have no power to move life forward. It is not my place, and not the place of anyone else, to pass judgment on anyone’s dreams. Your dreams, when they are sincere, positive and authentic, do not ever have to conflict with the dreams of others. And in living your authentic dreams, whatever they may be, you do a great service to all that is. In fact, the truth is that you owe it to life to dream.

Barbados is a long way from Texas. My route will take me around the arc of the US Gulf Coast to Key West, through parts of the Bahamas and then to Puerto Rico, from where I will island hop south past St. Lucia, and then eastward to Barbados. It's a total distance of more than 3,000 miles, with many stops along the way. Some of those stops will be in places I already know and love, and others will offer completely new adventures. Though I am a long way from actually setting sail on this journey, I have already begun to start to make it happen. That's an important thing to realize about dreams. The value begins to flow long before a dream is fully reached. In fact, it's really more appropriate to speak of dreams as unfolding than to refer to them as being reached. That unfolding begins the moment your dreams are born, and continues to benefit the whole world as you continue to focus on those dreams and bring them to life. Are you ready to feel the power of living your dreams? Then let's move forward.

Since 1995, Ralph Marston has authored and published The Daily Motivator, one of the web's most popular and enduring destinations for inspiration and personal development. In that time, Ralph has written more than 5,000 unique, original messages that serve as daily reminders of life's most positive possibilities. He has also created numerous inspiring video presentations that have been viewed by millions of people all over the world. In addition, Ralph's inspiring posts have made his Twitter account one of the most highly re-tweeted of all time.



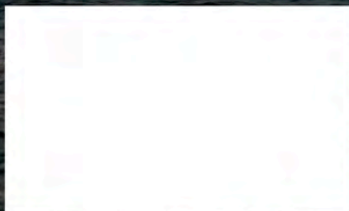
Karen & Ralph Marston at English Harbour, Antigua

You  
have access  
to an amazing  
machine that can be  
used to create anything you  
choose, anything you can imagine.

Not only do you have access to this amazing machine, you have an obligation to make purposeful and meaningful use of it. To do that, you must first connect with and commit to the authentic dreams you have for your life. With an intimate journey through his personal dreams, Daily Motivator author Ralph Marston shows how living your most treasured, authentic dreams will bring great fulfillment to your own life and enrich the whole world.

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