

Take Back Your Life Thirty Minutes at a Time

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a vast, green, rolling landscape under a bright blue sky filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. A single, well-manicured tree stands prominently on a small grassy hill in the distance, slightly to the right of the center.

The
POWER
of a
HALF
HOUR

"His concept of 'thirty minutes' can help you make the most of each day."
—JAMES ROBISON, LIFE Outreach International

TOMMY BARNETT

Praise for
The Power of a Half Hour

“*The Power of a Half Hour* is full of unique, practical, and God-inspired truths to keep your time focused on all that God has called you to do. If you apply these principles, I believe it will bring renewed purpose and inspiration to your life.”

—JOYCE MEYER, Bible teacher and best-selling author

“Before reading this book, I never thought of seeing thirty minutes as a power-packed opportunity to improve my life. Pastor Barnett’s half-hour power principles have helped me strengthen my faith, become more productive, and connect with those I love with more intentionality. This book is as inspirational as it is practical, and I plan to use it as an integral part of my staff development program.”

—LYSA TERKEURST, *New York Times* best-selling author and president of Proverbs 31 Ministries

“Tommy Barnett inspires people to be bold witnesses and fulfill Christ’s commission. He accomplishes much for the kingdom. After reading this dynamic book, you’ll understand why. His concept of ‘thirty minutes’ can help you make the most of each day—in many areas—and enable you to have a positive influence on others.”

—JAMES ROBISON, founder and president, LIFE Outreach International

“Pastor Tommy Barnett is a hero of mine. He is a father in the faith, a man of great conviction, and a visionary who has changed the lives of many—including my own. His grasp on the Word of God and its power to radically alter the course of your life will bless and inspire you. Allow the deep revelations and years of wisdom from this man of God to impart health and life into your faith journey.”

—BRIAN HOUSTON, senior pastor, Hillsong Church

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WATERBROOK
P R E S S

THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR
PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

Trade Paperback ISBN 978-0-307-73186-9
Hardcover ISBN 978-0-307-73184-5
eBook ISBN 978-0-307-73185-2

Copyright © 2013 by Tommy Barnett Ministries, Inc.

Personal Power of a Half Hour Action Plan and Small-Group Study Guide prepared by Stephen Sorenson.

Cover design by Kristopher K. Orr

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Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC, New York, a Penguin Random House Company.

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The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:

Barnett, Tommy.

The power of a half hour : take back your life 30 minutes at a time / Tommy Barnett.—First Edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-307-73184-5—ISBN 9780307731852 1. Time management—Religious aspects—

Christianity. I. Title.

BV4598.5.B37 2013

248.4—dc23

2013029666

Printed in the United States of America

2014—First Trade Paperback Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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I dedicate this book to my administrative assistant
of forty years, Lynn Lane, who helped me live my life
by schedule and the half-hour principle.

CONTENTS

Introduction: The Power of a Half Hour	xi
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PART 1: THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR TO IMPACT YOUR LIFE

1. Change Your Destiny	3
2. Why Time Matters	9

PART 2: THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR TO CHART YOUR LIFE PATH

3. Clarify Your Vision and Purpose	19
4. Solidify Your Values.	23
5. Sharpen Your Gifts and Abilities	27

PART 3: THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH

6. Make a Regular Connection	33
7. Friends “Hang Out”	37
8. Listen	41

PART 4: THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR TO BUILD YOUR CHARACTER

9. Humble Yourself	47
10. Repent and Forgive	53
11. Own a Great Attitude.	57
12. Practice “Gr—attitude”	61
13. Slow Down	65
14. When God Calls...Answer “Yes”	69

PART 5: THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR
TO ADVANCE YOUR DREAMS

15. Follow Your Passion.	75
16. Prepare for Success	79
17. Make a Career “Work”	85
18. Activate Your Creativity.	91
19. Sustain Hope	95

PART 6: THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR
TO IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

20. Bless Others.	103
21. Connect with Impact	109
22. Strengthen Marriage	113
23. Build a Healthy Family	117
24. Raise Kids Right	123
25. People Are Just People	131

PART 7: THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR
TO CHANGE THE WORLD

26. Serve in a Loving Church	137
27. Spread the Gospel.	143
28. Give Extravagantly	149
29. Take Kingdom Risks	153
30. Act!	161
Half-Hour Power Principles.	166
Personal Power of a Half Hour Action Plan	167
Small-Group Study Guide	197
Notes	205

THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR

My name is Tommy Barnett. I'm a pastor and have devoted my entire adult life to helping people connect with God and find better ways to live. I could fill up this book and more with all kinds of spiritual and practical ideas about what works in life and what doesn't. I think it would be good stuff, but I have one practical idea that I know from my own experience rises far above all the others.

I admit it's not an overly unique concept, like the invention of the Internet, for example. However, it's an idea that has helped me realize success and great satisfaction in all aspects of my personal and professional life. I mean everything—from personal goals and dreams to marriage to raising a family to relationships to work.

I believe the idea can change your life,
though, as it has changed mine.

Most importantly, it has helped me serve God and others more effectively.

Trust me, my idea is not rocket science; in fact, it's so simple that anyone can understand and benefit from it.

I believe the idea can change your life, though, as it has changed mine.

I call it *the power of a half hour*.

Many people think of a half hour as a minimal or meaningless gap in time,

downtime to catch your breath between periods of major effort. But the truth is your half hours can determine the difference between success and failure. Your half hours direct and shape your future.

You can literally change your world in thirty minutes. In the same way that your effect on the world is felt one life at a time, so is that effect delivered through the careful and thoughtful investment of your half hours. The beauty of this reality is that anyone can do it. You don't need a PhD, and you don't need a life coach to pull it off. All you need is to accept the idea, have a clear sense of your God-given purpose, examine your activity patterns, sensitize yourself to your time choices, and start taking advantage of the power of a half hour.

Every half hour in your day is a power-loaded resource. Your choice of how to spend those minutes is the focus of this book, which I intend to make a practical conversation about a resource that we misunderstand, abuse, take for granted, and ignore.

I want to help you become the person God intends you to be and accomplish His plans for your life. And in order to do that, you need to use your small increments of time wisely—not just the big slices of time that are devoted to both routine daily activities and major life events.

I agree with Harvey Mackay who said, “Time is free, but it’s priceless. You can’t own it, but you can use it. You can’t keep it, but you can spend it. Once you’ve lost it, you can never get it back.”¹

I know that it’s not easy to find even a “free” hour in the world we live in. I also have learned that it’s difficult to accomplish a great deal in a quarter hour—especially if you need to communicate graciously and genuinely with another person within that time frame. But a half hour—*it works!*

CLAIMING THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR

Here’s how we will approach turning your half hours into life-changing blocks of time. In the seven parts of this book, I will outline how seizing the power of a half hour can make such a difference in these major areas:

- Impact
- Purpose and goals
- Faith
- Character
- Dreams
- Relationships
- Advancing God's kingdom

To help you remember key themes in this book, each chapter contains a *Half-Hour Power Principle*.

By the way, researchers tell us that most people never finish reading the books they start. Because I think there's too much helpful information in these pages for you to abandon the content before you get to the end, let me suggest that you do four simple but practical things as you read this book.

First, read the book in half-hour spaces in your schedule. Each of the chapters in the book is short enough to read easily in a half hour. You might want to have more than one block during a day when you read the book, but start this practice as you engage with this book. In addition, at the back of this book you will find a Personal Power of a Half Hour Action Plan. This plan is set up to help you, over a thirty-day period, fully incorporate *The Power of a Half Hour* concepts into all major areas of your life. You have heard that it takes about a month to establish a new habit? I urge you to use this thirty-day plan to make the power of a half hour a habit you will never break!

Second, if something strikes you as personally helpful, jot down notes about changes you need to make. Too often we are so intent on getting through a book that we forget some of the useful insights or challenges it provided.

Third, pray that God will help you to implement the things you discover in these pages (or in your related reflections) that will improve your life experience.

Fourth, and finally, express a commitment to someone you know and trust that you are going to integrate these simple changes into your lifestyle. Ask that person to check up on you once or twice a month to see how intentional you are being with your half hours. That simple act of accountability will help prevent

the reading of this book from being just another helpful but forgotten task. (You may also wish to find mutual encouragement in learning the half-hour concepts by attending a small-group discussion. A guide for such a study is included at the end of the book.)



I've been practicing these principles so long that I can now say I am a product of my half hours. I don't always get it right, but I'm very much aware of the gift of life and the value of time. My half hours—the ones I carefully plan, as well as the unplanned ones I discover—are committed to doing His will in my life because I want to serve our God and others.

I've been practicing these principles
so long that I can now say I am
a product of my half hours.

If you get your half hours right, God will not only change your life but also use you to alter the lives of the people and organizations you influence. I sincerely believe the future is not going to be defined by those who rely on their intelligence, their talent, or their good looks. Instead, the future is dependent on the choices made by God's people in the time that He has placed at our disposal.



The Power of a Half Hour to
IMPACT YOUR LIFE



CHANGE YOUR DESTINY

Half-Hour Power Principle:
Thirty minutes can wreck or redeem a life.

Wonderful and bad things can happen in a mere eighteen hundred seconds. Just ask a man I know named Carl Schultz.² He experienced the power of a half hour in extremes.

Carl is a born salesman. From his very youngest years, he displayed unusual persuasive skills, figuring out ways to make money by selling things to his friends and, later on, to adults. It is a talent that has served him well.

In the early eighties Carl tired of selling for the benefit of other people and decided to begin his own company. He started a firm that sold bullion, numismatic coins, and precious metals. He quit his day job, moved a few office supplies into his bedroom, and began his new operation—with less than fifty dollars in cash!

Carl hustled to foster his start-up. He called old suppliers and clients from his former place of business and talked to friends and relatives about his new venture. Slowly he built a clientele and a reputation. But he struggled to grow the business and make ends meet.

After speaking at a trade show in New Orleans, Carl was contacted by one of the people in attendance to discuss investment options. They set up a time to meet a few weeks after the conference. The potential client, a CPA, was interested

in investing substantial sums of money but wanted to test the process with Carl's firm using some smaller amounts before engaging in large deals.

The one wrinkle was that the CPA insisted that his transactions be conducted in cash and that nothing be reported to the government. This was soon after the federal government had instituted a new law requiring that all transactions above \$10,000 in cash be reported to the IRS. Carl was aware of the new law and explained it to his client. The CPA, however, was adamant: if Carl insisted on reporting the transactions, the CPA would take his business elsewhere.

An intense thirty-minute conversation about compliance with the reporting law occurred. Throughout that exchange Carl pondered his company's precarious financial position and the benefits he would receive from several small investments that would lead to serious money from this demanding client. After a half hour of negotiating, Carl talked himself into doing the deal without reporting anything to the government. As he reflected on the pros and cons of the arrangement, he landed on the side of feeding his family and sustaining his company rather than adhering to the letter of the law. He could not justify passing up the potential profits.

Before finally consenting to move forward, though, the CPA had concerns of his own. Wary of Carl's intentions, he demanded to know how he could be sure that Carl wouldn't mess up the transaction and get them both in trouble. Carl confidently reassured the investor. "There's nothing to worry about. I do this kind of thing all the time. You'll be safe with me." Comforted by Carl's compelling and persuasive manner, the CPA agreed to move ahead with the deal.

After a few transactions were expertly and smoothly handled by Carl, the CPA visited Carl's office with a fellow investor. They slid a briefcase with \$200,000 in cash across Carl's desk. Carl had an uneasy feeling about what was going on. This was the payday he had been waiting for, yet he felt queasy inside. After he opened the briefcase to inspect the money, he walked over to his window, which overlooked the building's parking lot. As he pondered the current transaction, he noticed the parking lot was packed with black Crown Victorias. Seconds later there was a loud crash and the door to his office flew off the hinges. Two dozen law enforcement agents rushed into the room, holding badges and

guns, while another four dozen held down positions throughout the company office and building. There were agents from the FBI, IRS, Secret Service, and local organized crime units.

It turned out that the CPA wasn't a CPA at all; he was a special undercover agent of the IRS, posing as an investor. Carl was immediately taken into custody, and his company's records were thrown into boxes and hustled into the cars below. The company's employees were shocked.

Eventually Carl was indicted on two counts: illegal racketeering and conspiracy to commit fraud against the federal government. That original thirty-minute conversation, after which Carl decided to knowingly break the law in favor of sustaining his business and family, was going to cost him everything he treasured in this world.

CARL FACES THE MUSIC

As the authorities were preparing their case against Carl, his lawyer discovered that the incriminating tape recording of the initial thirty-minute conversation had somehow been lost. Carl's lawyer was ecstatic and proclaimed that they could beat the charges if Carl would plead not guilty and claim that the conversation never took place. That sent Carl into another round of soul searching.

That's when I entered the picture. As a member of our church in Phoenix, Carl had not only been attending services faithfully for years but also spent a lot of time on the prayer mountain behind our church. Right after he heard the good news from his lawyer about the missing tape, Carl drove to the mountain to seek God's direction. He saw me on the other side of the mountain praying but did not disturb me. But after I returned to my office, he followed me there and asked my assistant if he could get a few minutes alone with me.

"Pastor, I can get out of this mess scot-free if I just tell the judge that the charges against me are false and that I did not do what they claim. But I feel torn as to whether I should be protecting myself or telling the truth. What should I do?"

"Carl," I responded, sensing the pain of indecision and uncertainty that he

was enduring, “I know that you’ll do the right thing in this situation, because the right thing is always the right thing to do.”

I think he was a bit disappointed that I didn’t give him a more definitive directive, but he thanked me for my counsel, left my office, and drove directly to the office of the prosecutor. He managed to get past the receptionists and assistants and made his way to the prosecutor’s office, where he confronted her. Before she could stop him from talking, he blurted out his confession.

“Ma’am, if you say that what I did is really a crime, then I must be guilty, because I did it.” The prosecutor, alarmed by the legal implications of the accused confessing to her, shouted for him to stop talking and to get his lawyer before he said another word. She covered her ears and shooed him out of her office.

Confused by her reaction, Carl left as instructed and called his lawyer, describing what he had just done. A string of profanities coursed through the phone line, along with some impolite questions about Carl’s sanity.

The months between his arrest and the trial were the darkest days of Carl’s life. He contemplated committing suicide as a way to provide money for his family. He prayed fervently for God’s forgiveness. He wallowed in grief, thinking about all the suffering caused by that wrong decision he’d made in a simple half-hour meeting. His business was at a standstill: the company’s records had been confiscated, employees had quit out of fear of being tainted by the firm’s reputation if there was a fraud conviction, and the office doors had been chained shut. Then word came that the prosecutor was likely to seek a seventeen-year jail sentence for Carl—for acts of dishonesty that he had engaged in and wanted to admit to doing.

After hours and hours of arguments with his own legal team, Carl reached the courtroom on the day of the trial and pleaded guilty to both counts. Before the half-hour sentencing hearing was concluded, the judge asked Carl if he had any final comments. Once again, Carl offered an unexpected comment.

“Your Honor,” he said softly, “I don’t know why the system is set up the way it is, but if the intention is to scare the daylights out of people like me, and to ensure that we will never break the law again, then I can assure you the system is

working. This has been a total nightmare. I am embarrassed by my choices and so sorry for breaking the law. I won't be testing the law in the future."

The judge watched Carl for a few moments and then reviewed a few of the documents in his case file. When at last he responded, the judge miraculously showed Carl grace, giving him five years of probation without any time in prison. "I rarely have guilty people stand before me who not only admit their guilt but also pledge to stay straight," he explained. "Something tells me I should give you a second chance. Don't prove my intuition wrong."

A DESTINY ALTERED

Now, a quarter century later, Carl's life is a dream come true. His business is thriving, having completed billions of dollars of transactions since his day in court. That scary half hour in the courtroom was the beginning of a new life—one in which he strives to always tell the truth and act with integrity. It began when he pleaded guilty, against the advice of his high-powered and well-paid attorneys, simply because it was the truth; and it ended with his admission of remorse and fear in the jaws of the justice system, another unusual expression of honesty and humility.

Against all expectations, Carl describes 1986 as the best year of his life. He now has a healthy marriage to his wife of thirty-five years, a wonderful relationship with his now-grown daughters, and a reputable and profitable company. He is a generous donor to our church and other organizations. He humbly talks about not deserving any of this grace from God, but he loves his life and the opportunities he now has to bless others.

All of this was jeopardized by the power of a half hour. Before the trial, he used that power to bring disgrace and hardship on himself, his family, and his employees. During the trial, he used a half hour to resolve his difficulties by advancing the truth.



How about you? I bet that if you took a half hour right now to make a list of significant choices and actions you've undertaken during the course of your life that happened within a thirty-minute period, or noteworthy outcomes that resulted from the accumulation of your efforts over a series of related thirty-minute segments, you would be surprised at how much your life has been influenced by these time blocks.

It's true; you can turn your life—or someone else's—around in thirty minutes. Armed with the Word of God and the ears to hear what God would like to say to you through His Holy Spirit, things can change radically for the better if you're willing to invest that little amount of time into getting things right with God. He won't force you to do so; it's your choice. But it is time well spent.



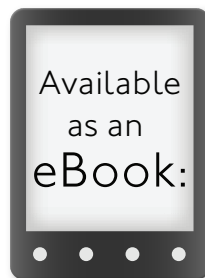
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