

BYRON V. GARRETT

The
ABCs
of **Life**

Words of Wisdom
From A to Z—
for Living Life
to the Fullest



SCHOLASTIC



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NEW YORK • TORONTO • LONDON • AUCKLAND • SYDNEY
MEXICO CITY • NEW DELHI • HONG KONG • BUENOS AIRES

Praise for *The ABCs of Life*

“I am honored to be able to voice my support for both my friend, Byron Garrett, and his powerful book, *The ABCs of Life*. As an inspirational artist, the messages that run through this book truly hit home for me. This is more than just a self-help book. This is a book that puts you on a path to greatness. Byron’s method of dissecting such powerful insight into something as basic as the ABCs makes this an easy yet impactful read. If you truly take the time to digest the messages from *The ABCs of Life*, you will find yourself inspired, prepared, and filled with purpose.”

—**DONALD LAWRENCE**, Grammy Award-Winning Producer

“Every young person will find here a powerful road map to help realize his or her own God-given potential. Byron Garrett is a dream maker and has spent his life supporting young people and their families—he knows what he’s talking about.”

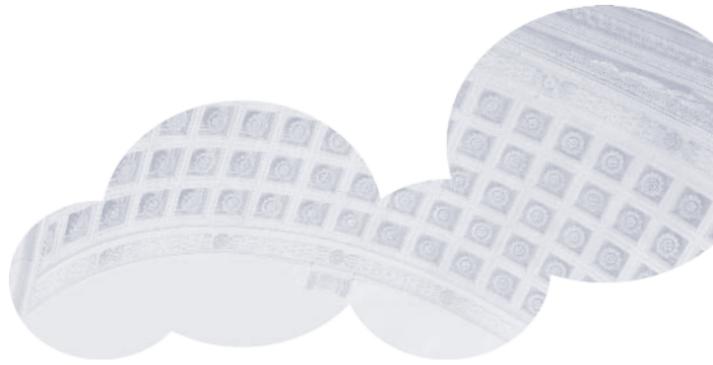
—**MARGUERITE KONDRACKÉ**, former President and CEO, America’s Promise Alliance

“*The ABCs of Life* will take you on an inspirational journey to reach your highest potential. This book provides a wealth of knowledge for the development of your personal blueprint toward the path to new heights.”

—**MONTA ELLIS**, NBA Player, and **JUANIKA ELLIS**

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Accept the Challenge

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“Accepting the challenge requires that you take action.”

You must be willing to accept the challenge to be highly successful in life. Most people spend their entire lives waiting for opportunities and great things to happen. Instead of waiting for opportunities, you must take hold of your future and face each day with a spirit of optimism and excitement. You must make the opportunities happen—and recognize each chance to do so.

I remember my parents telling me as a child that the early bird gets the worm. This virtue still holds true. No matter your station in life, begin to accept the challenge as soon as the sun begins to rise each day. Time waits for no one—so there’s no time for hesitation and no time for second-guessing yourself.

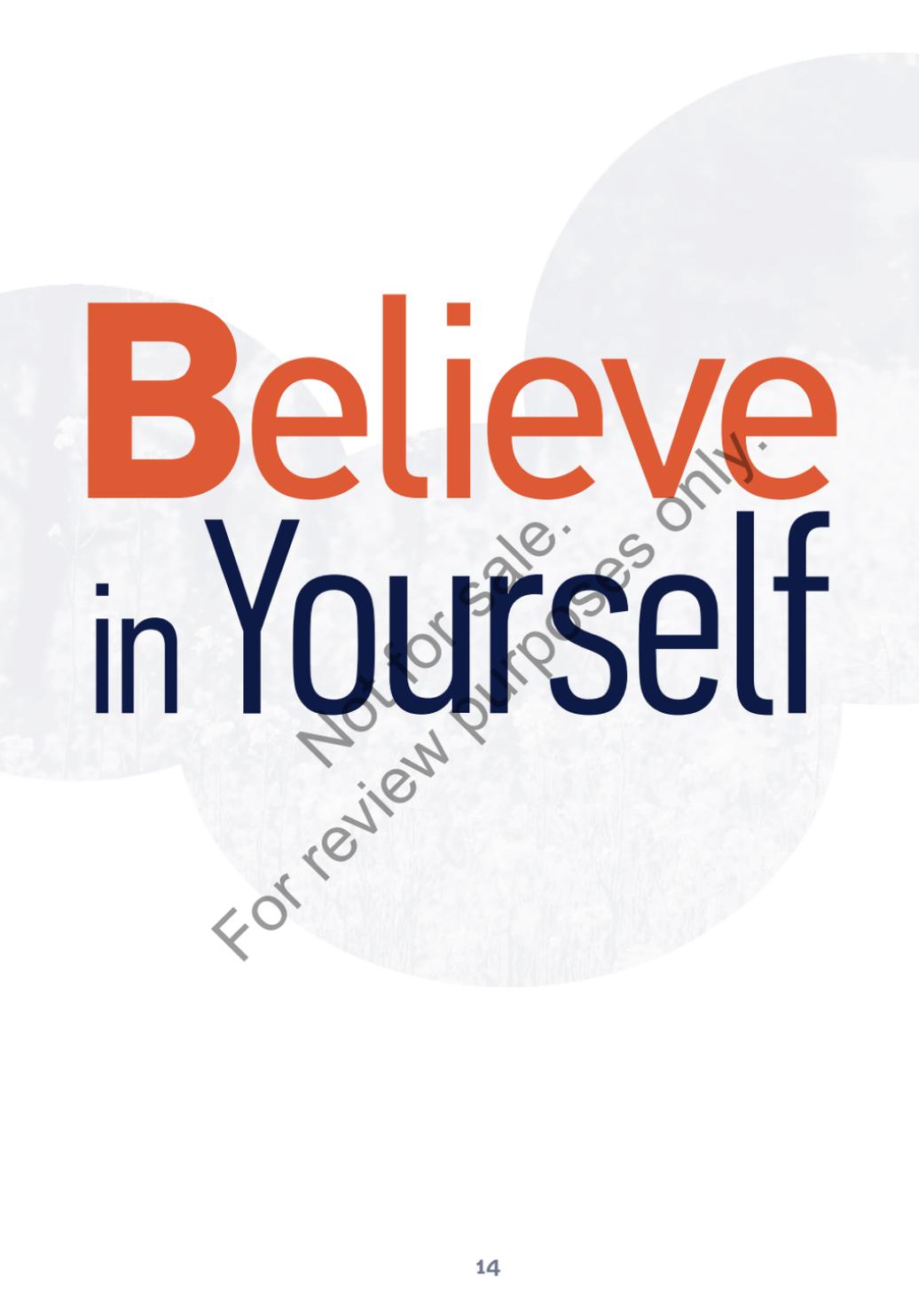
You’ll encounter plenty of people throughout life who will second-guess you. Don’t join them. Leave minor details to those who live minor lives. You are on the verge of achieving greatness. Embrace it and make this your reality.

Accepting the challenge requires that you take action.

Whether it’s a baby step, a hop, a jump, or a giant leap, begin each new day with the desire to excel and a passion for greatness.

Without question, “accept” is an action word. You must accept the challenge, adopting the positive mindset that it’s a brand new day, and that this new day is filled with opportunities, sometimes disguised as obstacles. Know you are going to make it happen. Begin today.

Accept the challenge.



Believe in Yourself

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“To live a meaningful life,
you must find something you
believe in wholeheartedly.”

During college, I took classes that dealt with non-profit management. One of the most important lessons I learned was the concept of finding a cause that you believe in with all your heart. One of my professors said that you must demonstrate your belief by giving to the cause. Highly effective people are those who operate in areas where they possess great belief.

A good salesperson believes in his or her product. A great salesperson not only believes in the product but also exudes passion and purpose connected to the product. To live a meaningful life, you must find something you believe in wholeheartedly. For parents, this may be creating a quality life for a family. For an athlete, knowing that with enough focus and conditioning one will excel in a sport. For teachers, this

is probably the belief that all students can learn. For students, it's believing that you have the ability to earn an A or a B instead of settling for a C. Whatever you believe in, recognize it's the *belief* that keeps you going when you are tired, weary, and worn down. This belief lifts you when others put you down and gives you the courage to try again when it appears you've fallen short.

This kind of passionate belief inspires others to believe as well.

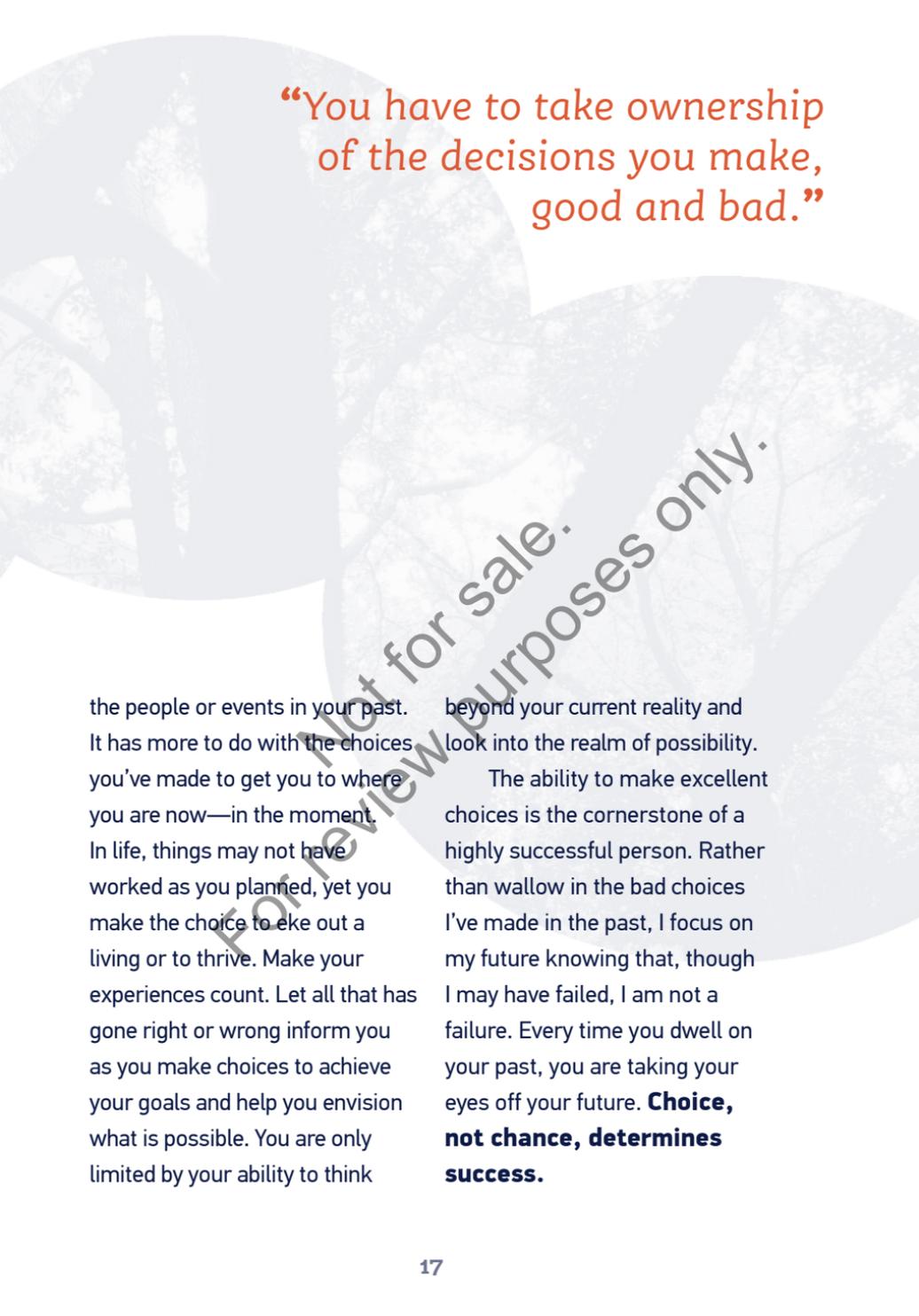
To live a highly successful life, you must believe in yourself. *You* are your primary reason for success. You are the agent of your own success—and you must exude a passion for your purpose. If you are not strong and determined, you will have great difficulty getting others to believe in you. **Believe in yourself.**

Choice, Not Chance, Determines Success

Success is all about the choices you make. Average people take random chances. Then, they waste time making excuses for what they have or have not accomplished in life. You have the opportunity to live your life as you'd like to, but you have to take ownership of the decisions you make, good and bad. Stop making excuses; don't fall into the "Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda" syndrome.

Shift your concentration from merely taking a chance

to creating a plan and making the right choice. While we all need to take a chance every now and then, it is important to remember that chances are often random, like the luck of the draw. Choices, on the other hand, require preparation in order to be ready and informed to make the right decision. Take ownership of your world with the understanding that you are the captain of your ship on the sea of life. If the boat sinks, it usually has nothing to do with



“You have to take ownership
of the decisions you make,
good and bad.”

the people or events in your past. It has more to do with the choices you've made to get you to where you are now—in the moment. In life, things may not have worked as you planned, yet you make the choice to eke out a living or to thrive. Make your experiences count. Let all that has gone right or wrong inform you as you make choices to achieve your goals and help you envision what is possible. You are only limited by your ability to think

beyond your current reality and look into the realm of possibility.

The ability to make excellent choices is the cornerstone of a highly successful person. Rather than wallow in the bad choices I've made in the past, I focus on my future knowing that, though I may have failed, I am not a failure. Every time you dwell on your past, you are taking your eyes off your future. **Choice, not chance, determines success.**

The ABCs of Life

Everyone could use some thoughtful advice and encouragement now and then. In this collection of 26 short, inspiring passages, you'll find just that. Byron V. Garrett guides adolescents and adults alike to take ownership of their lives and work toward excellence and success, even when life's inevitable obstacles arise. From "Accept the Challenge" to "Zealously Strive to Achieve," there is no shortage of motivating and meaningful ideas to live by.

"In The ABCs of Life, Byron V. Garrett challenges each of us to take hold of our future, face each day with excitement, and become a dream maker. Byron's life demonstrates he walks the talk. This book should be on every leader's desk for easy reference and constant inspiration."

—**DAN DOMENECH**, Executive Director, AASA
(American Association of School Administrators)

"Full of wisdom and truth, this book is a great read for those who aspire to live a life full of integrity and character and to have fun while doing so."

—**JEB BUSH**, former Governor of Florida; Chairman,
Foundation for Excellence in Education



BYRON V. GARRETT One of the most compelling voices of our times, Byron V. Garrett is Chairman of the National Family Engagement Alliance and directs the Innovative Schools program for Microsoft. Former CEO of the National PTA, Byron has advised government agencies, Fortune 500 companies, education organizations, and entertainers. A leading education advocate, Byron served as a key strategist for NBC News' Education Nation and produced the 1st Annual Building a Grad Nation Summit for the America's Promise Alliance. In addition, he is a former K-8 principal and served as a co-convenor of the Helping America's Youth Initiative for the White House.

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