

"This year,
dare to be
uncommon
every day."

THE ONE YEAR®

UNCOMMON LIFE

DAILY CHALLENGE

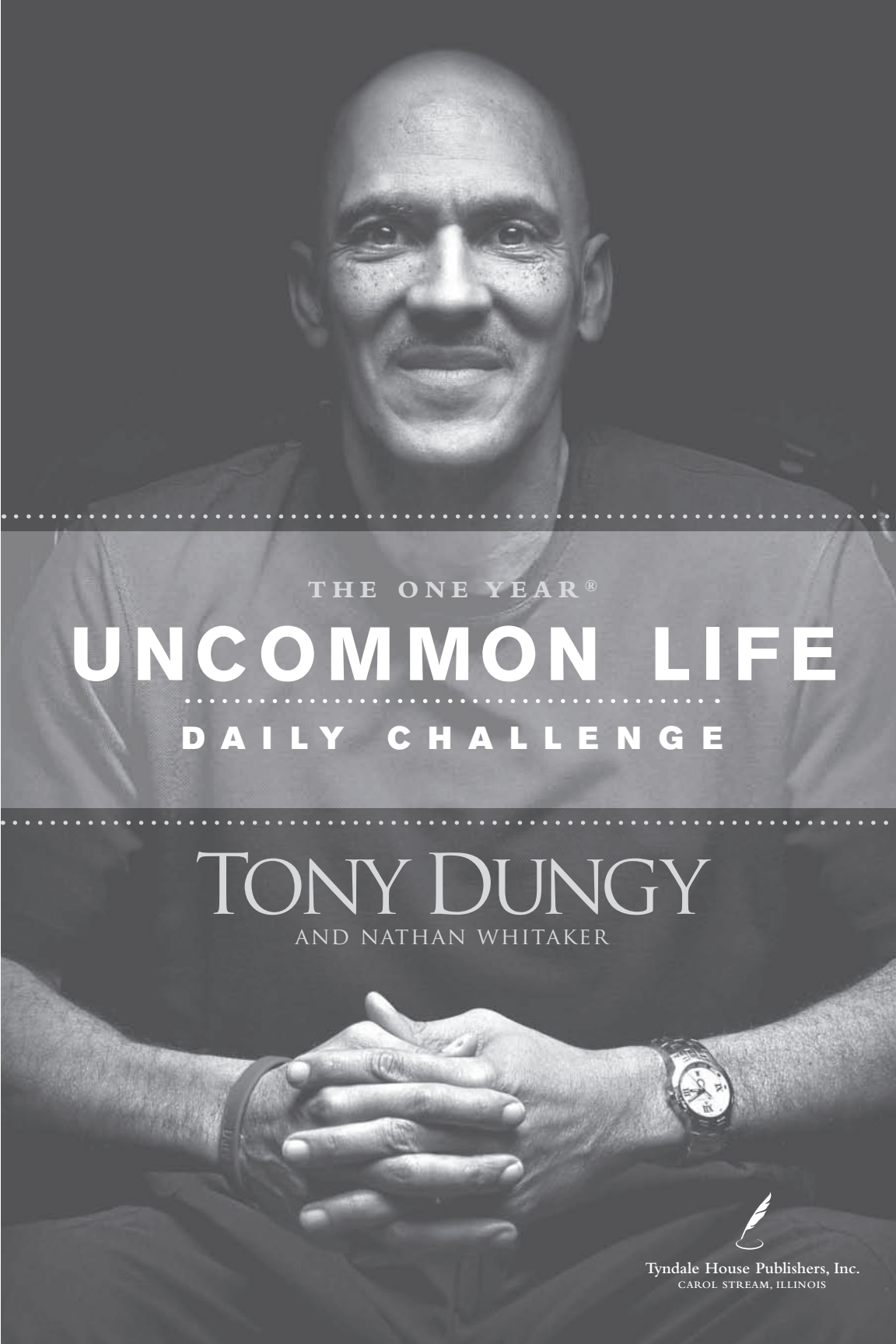
TONY DUNGY

AND NATHAN WHITAKER

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A black and white portrait of Tony Dungy, a bald man with a mustache, wearing a dark t-shirt. He is sitting with his hands clasped in his lap. He is wearing a watch on his left wrist and a dark wristband on his right. The background is dark and out of focus.

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The One Year Uncommon Life Daily Challenge

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How to Use This Book

We hope you will enjoy reading *The One Year Uncommon Life Daily Challenge* devotional as much as we enjoyed writing it.

For the last fourteen years, Tony has been in a Bible study with a number of other coaches. Reading *The One Year Bible* each year, they have not only engaged in a study of God's Word, but have engaged in the building of a community. As coaches from their original group in Tampa Bay have changed teams or left the National Football League altogether during that time span, Tony has found that the *One Year* format keeps them connected as a community.

On any given day, they all know what the others are reading. Essentially, everyone is on the same page. This knowledge sparks e-mails or voice mails or direct conversations—"What did you think about those verses from Ezekiel? I needed to hear that today. It really spoke to me because . . ."

With this *One Year Uncommon Life Daily Challenge*, our hope is that the format will create the same sense of community for you, which is why we have indicated dates for the readings, but have not tied them to any particular year. Wherever you are in life, jump right in with today's reading. And check out www.uncommonchallenge.com and www.coachdungy.com for more resources.

The book focuses on seven themes, with each theme repeating every seven days. Therefore, every week you will read one devotion from each of the themes:

- > Core
- > Family
- > Friends
- > Potential
- > Mission
- > Influence
- > Faith

January 1 starts with Core. Every seventh day that follows (January 8, 15, 22, 29, and so on) will be an insight on Core. Each devotion stands on its own, so that no matter what date you begin, whether it's January 1 or August 27, you can jump right in. No matter what year you begin, you will always be in community with others who are reading the devotional.

Each devotion includes Scripture and an Uncommon Key—an application or action to implement based on what you've just read. This isn't just a "read-it-and-you're-done" type of devotional. The goal is to not only engage your mind, but to also challenge your heart. That, too, is worth sharing with the community that you may form with others.

If you miss a day, keep going. Don't try to catch up, and don't feel guilty. Yesterday is gone—spend time with God *today*. Our prayer is that every day you will be blessed by what you read and challenged to do more for God's Kingdom.

Tony Dungy
Nathan Whitaker

January 1

A Personal Training Plan

I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:27

Self-control. Discipline. Getting in shape. A new commitment to stick to the plan.

How many times have you written down these goals or thought about them just before January 1? In a CNN report last year on New Year's resolutions, it wasn't surprising to learn that losing weight is the most common goal people set. In fact, I would guess that year after year that rarely changes—it will always be up there. It's what fitness centers across the country gear up for: an influx of new customers and increased revenue in January more than any other time of the year.

And then we come to our senses—around February.

When I was a player, we'd see that occasionally when training camp rolled around. Professional football wasn't a year-round enterprise then, and guys had jobs in the off-season. Some would show up totally out of shape when camp began.

As followers of Christ, we should maintain self-control and discipline, especially when it comes to taking care of our bodies. Getting in shape and making a commitment to stay that way honors God. He has given us our bodies through the miracle of creation. Taking care of them, watching what we put into them, and being careful about how we use them each day are responsibilities we shouldn't take lightly.

But that mind-set is not only important for our physical bodies. That desire and discipline also applies to the training we do and the commitment we make to ourselves and to God. We commit to learn more about Him and about how we can be better disciples. It's not a passive endeavor. It takes resolve and repetition, consistently working at it for maximum results. And results will happen as we grow closer to Him. Real success in achieving goals—whether they were set on January 1 or not—comes when we know we can't do it by ourselves and look to the Lord for strength.

Where do you need improvement? More physical training for your body, taking care of the temple He gave you? Or getting to know Him better, spending time in His Word and with Him in prayer?

I'd recommend both on a regular basis. And ask God to be your trainer, to be there when you need to be pushed a little harder. He will give you the strength to help make your resolutions realities.

UNCOMMON KEY > *Moving from desire to actually doing better is only achieved with self-discipline, and self-discipline only works effectively when you trust in Him to help. Amp up your self-discipline in the areas you need it most.*

January 2

The Importance of a Look Squad

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

REVELATION 21:1-2

In practice each week, our team would run our plays against a “look squad.” That’s what we call our backup players who simulate the other team’s techniques as closely as possible. The simulation helps the first team’s players visualize how our plays will work against the other team’s. When we run a play and see it executed successfully in practice, we have the confidence to run it successfully during the game.

Visualization increases chances of success—not just in football but in any area of life. If we can’t see ourselves succeeding as workers, leaders, parents, or spouses, for example, we won’t have any confidence in those roles and be able to perform them well. But if we can see ourselves fulfilling our responsibilities effectively, achieving our goals, and relating to others healthily, we are much more likely to have the vision and the confidence to do those things. We tend to be able to accomplish what we can see.

God gives us a lot of pictures in the Bible—visions of who we are becoming and what His Kingdom is like. Today’s passage from Revelation is encouraging because it shows us our future with Him forever, as members of His family. If we can see our tomorrow and know how good it is, we can live in confidence today. We have courage to face anything when we know this is what awaits us on the other side of it.

Think of life as practice and the visions and instructions of Scripture as a “look squad.” Those words aren’t the full picture, because words can only tell us so much. The reality of the actual “game” will look a little different. But like the look squad during a week of practice, Scripture’s descriptions of the future give us and our families an idea of where we’re headed and what it will be like when we get there. We can know that God is standing there waiting for us with outstretched arms. And if we can “see” that future, we will have a much better idea of how to prepare for it, much more confidence as we move forward, and much more courage to handle anything today.

UNCOMMON KEY > *When you read God’s Word on a regular basis, you’ll discover what your future holds. Claim His promises and pay attention to His instructions. Seeing God in your tomorrow is the key to having confidence and courage today.*

January 3

The Best Role Model Who Ever Lived

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. PHILIPPIANS 3:12

We have a perfect role model.

Christ is our example on how to treat other people.

Christ is our example on the influence we can and should have on those around us.

Christ is the classic and eternal example of the role model we are called to be.

No other role model even comes close to Him. A tour through Scripture reveals a Christ who was always finding people where they were and taking them where they needed to be. He was always seeking people who thought they were nobodies and making them into somebodies.

In the verse above, Paul makes it clear that the goal we pursue—here on earth and in the hereafter—is Jesus Himself. He is the example we are to follow, the person we were meant to be like. We won't reach perfection until we see Him face-to-face, but we are called always to be moving in that direction. In His strength, we press on toward that goal one day at a time. He can make us who we need to be if we focus on Him and allow Him to work through us. The same Christ who went around making somebodies out of nobodies is still at work in our lives.

God has a purpose in shaping us to be like Jesus. We become His influence—His hands and heart—for everyone around us. Wherever we find ourselves, we can influence people for His glory. That begins at home in our families, but it extends to every other area: our friends, coworkers, neighbors, fellow church members, fellow students, teammates—everyone we come in contact with. God doesn't just glorify Himself by sending Jesus into this world. If we will let Him, He glorifies Himself by sending Jesus into this world *through us*.

UNCOMMON KEY > *Today and every day, remember that you are a personal representative of Jesus Christ. Always strive for the perfection of Christ—for yourself and for those around you.*

January 4

Reaching Incremental Goals

Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request. 1 CHRONICLES 4:10, NIV

Few of us want to remain where we are without any improvement or increase. God has wired us to want to grow. But what kind of growth are we looking for? We have to be careful to focus on what’s really important and within our control, rather than external results we can’t really control.

My goals are usually qualitative, not quantitative. When I coached, my aim each season was not to win a certain number of games, but to have a team that played as well as it could and that was an asset to its community. I measured the team by whether it played up to its potential. And from year to year, I measured it by whether it improved.

That’s also how I measure myself. When I was a young assistant, I wanted to learn enough to one day be considered for a coordinator position. Then as a coordinator, I wanted to learn and improve so I could become a head coach. Sometimes our goals are a steady step-by-step progression, and sometimes they require risk. Whenever we ask God to enlarge our territories, we need faith to move to the next level. That always comes with the possibility of failure, although we can trust Him to be with us either to help us get there or to catch us when we fall. Over time, those steps of faith pay off. We grow and improve and reach higher goals.

Remember to focus on goals that are within your control. As a coach, I worked on learning more and improving my coaching abilities in order to be qualified for positions with greater responsibility. I couldn’t control whether I would be hired for those positions. When you do your part to prepare, you can trust God for the results. In His timing, He’s the one who enlarges your territory. Your job is to make yourself ready for it.

UNCOMMON KEY > *A little improvement each day makes a big difference over time. Ask God to enlarge your territory, but prepare yourself along the way to handle it well.*

January 5

First Things First

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. MATTHEW 6:33

When people ask me to sign something, lately I've begun using this verse. Its truth is such a helpful way for me to structure the focus of my days.

How do you begin to set the right priorities for your life against the pull of the things the world says are important? It's not easy, but it's absolutely essential if you want to make sure you don't miss the things that matter most.

With today's verse, the natural tendency is to read the first part quickly in order to get to that last phrase: "and he will give you everything you need." I know; I've been there. And if we're honest about it, we would probably admit that we're usually inclined to live each day primarily focusing on "everything [we] need." It's the stuff that slams us smack in the face when we wake up each morning and becomes more and more pressing throughout the day. The pressing needs around us—even if they are good things—can take the focus away from what matters most: our relationship with God and the people He has placed in our lives.

But read the verse again: "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else" (another Bible translation says, "Seek first His Kingdom"). How can you do that? With all the challenges, obstacles, and urgent matters of each day, is it even possible?

Let me suggest that you keep doing what you are doing right now—taking a few moments to be quiet and spend time with God. When you do, you will be pleasantly surprised at how He will lessen your worries about tomorrow and release you from the breathless pace of the world's "urgent" priorities for today in order to make room for His priorities.

Dedicating time to the priorities that God has entrusted to you may not seem significant right now, but to someone who needs you, it could make all the difference in his or her life—and in yours.

UNCOMMON KEY > *Determine to seek God's priorities for your life. It begins by spending time with Him. Try to do it every day—for yourself and for those who matter most to you.*

January 6

Uniquely You

“I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” JEREMIAH 29:11

Have you thought about all the events that led up to this moment in your life—why you’re here, how you’ve been shaped, what caused you to read this book or seek God’s plans for your life? Have you wondered how much of it is accidental or random and how much is designed?

I believe God knew exactly where you would be right now and exactly what you would be like. He knew about your passions and gifts and the platform you have. In fact, I believe He was very purposeful in designing your life. He made you to be uniquely significant and to have an eternal impact on the world around you.

Let that sink in. How would you live differently if you really believed that God had intentionally designed you to impact others? What steps of faith would you take if you knew He had already planned them? What would you attempt if you were fully convinced He was backing you? Would you set out to accomplish big things in your community? Would you go into the local schools with a sense of mission? What impossible problems would suddenly seem possible to deal with? The fact is that when you believe you were designed for a purpose, you will live with purpose.

I realize we all have some areas we can improve, and just because we believe God designed us doesn’t mean we know what for. But God is gracious. He knows we’ll fall short, and He knows that finding His will for our lives will be a process. We’ll make mistakes along the way. Grace isn’t an excuse to give less than our best, but it is reassuring to know that God doesn’t pressure us to be perfect. When we fall, we can get up, dust ourselves off, and keep moving toward the goal. Whatever our past, God has future plans for us. And those plans are good.

Don’t be afraid to try big things that fit with God’s purposes. No problem is too big for Him to solve, whether it’s in the lives of people around us, on a national or global scale, or anything in between. That means no problem is too big for us to attempt to solve in His strength. We were designed for such purposes.

UNCOMMON KEY > *God was very intentional about your design, your opportunities, and your purpose. Thank Him and look for ways to use what He has given you in the best way possible.*

January 7

A Gift You Don't Want to Return

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. MATTHEW 5:3

We would always ask the players to come in on Monday, then give them Tuesday off. As strange as it may sound, many times a player suffered an injury in the game and didn't know it until he did a little activity the next day. He'd think that he was okay, but he really wasn't. The day-after workout revealed the need for treatment.

The Bible says God blesses those who realize their need for Him. That seems like an easy way to be blessed, but a lot of people can't bring themselves to realize they need anyone, even God. Still, that doesn't keep Him from pursuing them. He wants all of us to spend eternity in heaven with Him.

Step one is to realize we need Him. Jesus made that clear. Not a single one of us is perfect, and because we have fallen short of God's standard for our lives—in other words, we have sinned—we are separated from Him. He is holy and perfect, and our sin puts a gap between us and Him. Without being holy, we can't be in a right relationship with Him or even come close to experiencing His presence—unless He makes a way.

God has provided that way in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us and take the punishment for our sinful nature so that we could have a direct relationship with Christ and God. All we have to do is desire to be in a relationship with God, understand that we can't do it ourselves, and believe that God sent His Son for us.

That's a gift from God. It cost Him a lot, but to us it's absolutely free. Have you ever accepted that free gift?

When we truly believe in the free gift of Jesus in our hearts; acknowledge that we need that gift; accept Him as the Savior who died in our place for the consequences of our sin; and embrace Him as our Lord, making Him the number one priority in our lives, then we are absolutely assured of spending eternity with Him in heaven (John 3:16-17). Nothing we can do has greater power to change our lives than making this one decision.

UNCOMMON KEY > *God's gift is anything but common, and it's by far the most important key for living an uncommon life. The implications are huge. What is your relationship with Jesus Christ?*