Get Your Life Back: Everyday Practices For a World Gone Mad

God wants to come to us and restore our lives. He really does. But if our soul is not well, it's almost impossible to receive him. Dry, scorched ground can't absorb the very rain it needs. From that candid assessment, John Eldredge in his book *Get Your Life Back: Everyday Practices For a World Gone Mad*, offers an essential field manual for recovering your soul. On one hand, the book is filled with some greatly needed wake-up calls. But on the other hand, the author provides hopeful and helpful guidance for restoring your soul.

As together we navigate arguably the most life-altering time of our lives, this is a timely and essential roadmap to caring for the most important, least understood, and too-often-overlooked thing about us—our souls.

Take a look at these Book Notes and decide for yourselves if some halftime adjustments are in order.

Title: ***Get Your Life Back:*** *Everyday Practices For a World Gone Mad*

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Book Description:

In *Get Your Life Back*, New York Times bestselling author John Eldredge provides a practical, simple, and refreshing guide to taking your life back.

By practicing a few wonderfully simple practices—or what John calls "graces"—you can begin to recover your soul, disentangle from the tragedies of this broken world, and discover the restorative power of beauty.

Ask yourself:

– Are you happy most of the time?
– Do you feel deeply loved?
– Are you excited about your future?
– How often do you feel lighthearted?

After reading this book you will…

– Learn how to insert the One Minute Pause into your day
– Begin practicing "benevolent detachment" and truly let it all go
– Offer kindness toward yourself in the choices you make
– Drink in the simple beauty available to you every day
– Take realistic steps to unplug from technology overload

These simple practices and others are ready for the taking. You don't need to abandon your life to get it back.

Begin restoring your life here and now. Your soul will thank you for it.

Book Quotes:

My soul just can't do life at the speed of smartphones. Location 54

Are you happy most of the time? How often do you feel lighthearted? Are you excited about your future? Do you feel deeply loved? When was the last time you felt carefree? Location 57

But this frantic, volatile world constantly wilts the soul, dries it out like a raisin, making it almost impossible to receive the life God is pouring forth. Location 66

Sipping God with teaspoons, not drinking great gulps; wading, not swimming. My soul felt like a shallow rain puddle. But I know the soul isn't a shallow puddle at all; it's deep and vast, capable of symphonies and heroic courage. I wanted to be living from those deep places, but I felt trapped in the shoals. Location 70

God wants to come to us and restore our lives. He really does. But if our soul is not well, it's almost impossible to receive him. Dry, scorched ground can't absorb the very rain it needs. Location 84

Our souls are exquisite vessels created by God for him to saturate. Location 87

We live in a crazy-making world. So much stimulation rushes at us with such unrelenting fury, we are overstimulated most of the time. Things that nourish us — a lingering conversation, a leisurely stroll through the park, time to savor both making and then enjoying dinner — these are being lost at an alarming rate; we simply don't have room for them. Location 147

The One Minute Pause. I simply let it go. I pray, Jesus — I give everyone and everything to you. I keep repeating it until I feel like I'm actually releasing and detaching. I give everyone and everything to you, God. All I'm trying to accomplish right now is a little bit of soul-space. I'm not trying to fix anything or figure anything out. I'm not trying to release everything perfectly or permanently. That takes a level of maturity most of us haven't found. But I can let it go for sixty seconds…Then I ask for more of God: Jesus — I need more of you; fill me with more of you, God. Restore our union; fill me with your life. Location 168

Over time I've found no better practice to help clear out my cluttered soul than the practice of benevolent detachment. The ability to let it go, walk away — not so much physically but emotionally, soulfully. Location 276

Jesus began teaching me about benevolent detachment almost two years ago. Every time I would turn to him with a question, he would say, Give everyone and everything to me. The invitation rang so true; I knew I needed to learn this. So I began to practice it as best I could. But then Jesus kept repeating the invitation. I'd be asking about something entirely unrelated to the people in my life — car repairs, scheduling a trip, my tax returns — and Jesus would reply, Give everyone and everything to me. It was irritating. I finally realized that the reason he kept repeating it was because I wasn't practicing it very well. I was carrying people. Worrying about things. Location 341

We need to make this clear — the invitation of God is an unburdened life. Come, you who are heavy laden. Cast your cares upon him. Live carefree before God. It's practically a party invitation. One of the least understood disciplines of the spiritual life. And therefore a wonderful place of discovery for each of us, and a truly liberating opportunity to experience more of God in our everyday experience. Location 381

As you practice release, what you're doing is creating soul space; you are literally carving out the intellectual and emotional space for God to come in. Location 392

Beauty is one of the richest graces God has provided to heal our souls and absorb his goodness. Location 421

Beauty reassures us that goodness is still real in the world, more real than harm or scarcity or evil. Beauty reassures us of abundance, especially that God is absolutely abundant in goodness and in life. Beauty reassures us there is plenty of life to be had. Location 478

Given beauty's healing effects, given how it soothes the soul and opens us up to the goodness of God, I hope you will intentionally do two things: Receive it for the gift it is! Pause, and let the beauty minister to you. I receive this into my soul. Too often we just notice and go on, like a pedestrian who steps over a hundred-dollar bill lying on the sidewalk. Stop and pick it up! In these moments you open yourself and receive the beauty, the gift, the grace — receive it into your being. Let it bring to you God's love, his tenderness, his rich goodness. We live so braced, not openly, but quite subtly — braced for the day, braced by the assault on our attention, braced by the noise around us. Pause. Location 504

Second, fill your world with beauty… Location 513

As I mentioned in the introduction, Americans consume something like 10 hours of media a day, 3 over 100,000 words and 34 gigabytes — which would crash a laptop in a week. What does the constant barrage of the trivial, urgent, mediocre, traumatic, heartbreaking, or buffoonish do to us when it comes in an unending stream — unfiltered, unexplained, unproven, unexpected, most of it unworthy — yet nevertheless we pay attention on demand? Location 562

Then I read the book I mentioned earlier, The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains, for which Nicholas Carr nearly won the Pulitzer Prize. He begins by recounting numerous conversations with very bright men and women, PhDs in their fields, who all confessed a similar phenomenon: the noticeable deterioration of their attention. Even though these intellectuals live and move in the world of books, research, literature, Carr was startled to corroborate so many reports that they couldn't read books anymore. Couldn't read articles, hadn't the patience even for a long blog post. He goes on to document how the Internet is reshaping not only our ability to take in information, it is altering the structures of our brains. We don't like being asked to focus on anything for very long anymore; we are adapted to the quick, short stimulus of the internet and our mobile devices. Location 567

Two types of people are being contrasted here, two types of experience: The first type is rooted and substantive and so life giving. Then there is the person so lacking in substance, so ephemeral that their reality is compared to dandelion puffs, chaff, that a breath of wind can sweep away. The key is this: the rooted person is able to meditate — give sustained attention to — the revelation of God. Not swipe, not multitask. Lingering focus. Location 625

Yeah, me too. Let's be honest: we prefer distraction. The more distracted we are, the less present we are to our souls ' various hurts, needs, disappointments, boredom, and fears. It's a short-term relief with long-term consequences. What blows my mind is how totally normal this has become; it's the new socially acceptable addiction. I've got a friend who decided to break with his; he now turns his phone off over the weekend. I text him, and he doesn't reply until Sunday night or Monday morning. I'm embarrassed by my irritation: C'mon, man — you know the protocol. Everybody agrees to be totally available, anywhere, anytime, 24 / 7. It's what we do. Location 663

Finding more of God, growing strong in soul and spirit, requires creating space in your day for God — to intentionally put yourself in a place that allows you to draw upon and experience the healing power of the life of God filling you. Over the ages, serious followers of Jesus have used stillness and quiet, worship, fasting, prayer, beautiful places, and a number of other "exercises" to drink deeply of the presence of God. And untangle their souls from the world. Location 674

Let me say it again, because it's so counter to the social air we breathe: what has become the normal daily consumption of input is numbing the soul with artificial meaning and purpose while in fact the soul grows thinner and thinner through neglect, harmed by the very madness that passes for a progressive life. We are literally being forced into the "shallows" of our life. Location 682

The difficult truth we don't want to admit is this: the way you treat your own heart is the way you'll end up treating everyone else's. Location 762

We do need more of God, much more. Little sips between long droughts will not sustain us. We need more of God in our bodies, our souls, our relationships, our work, everywhere in our lives. But when you live in a culture of the incessant upgrade of everything, the sensational, it gives the impression that if you're going to have a deeper, richer, amazing experience of God, it's going to have to come in some sensational way…I have some wonderful news for you: Nope. Not even close. Life is built on the dailies. Consider love, friendship, and marriage. Location 813

Pace of life is a good barometer too. What's the pace you're currently demanding of yourself? Would you ask the same pace of someone you love? Ask Jesus, What is the pace you want for me right now, Lord? He might have some things he'd like to say to you about that. Location 832

Kindness means not expecting perfection in these practices, not requiring yourself to feel anything, being gracious about your heart's slow journey toward God. Location 843

Do you allow a grace of transitions in your life, or do you simply blast from one thing to the next? Location 915

Our souls need transition time. Especially in this world. We will find God in the transitions. Notice that in the Gospels, it was during those transition times the disciples got to have Jesus to themselves; the intimacy was in those moments. God is in the mission too; of course he is. He meets us in crisis and action. But there is a sweetness to the downtime, even if it is brief. We can find more of God there. Location 957

Let's be honest — we will need to loosen our grasp on efficiency. Efficiency is often what drives us to remove all margin from our lives. To fill every moment. It is especially hard on our relationships. Location 969

Then I ran across a news release so shocking I had to read it twice. It didn't make the front page, but it should have: the average person now spends 93 percent of their life indoors (this includes your transportation time in car, bus, or metro). 2 Ninety – three percent — such a staggering piece of information. We should pause for a moment and let the tragedy sink in. Location 1006

This is a catastrophe, the final nail in the coffin for the human soul. You live nearly all your life in a fake world: artificial lighting instead of the warmth of sunlight or the cool of moonlight or the darkness of night itself. Artificial climate rather than the wild beauty of real weather; your world is always 68 degrees. Location 1013

We are looking for more of God. You're far more likely to find him in a walk through an orchard or a sit by a pond than you are in a subway terminal. Of course God is with us and for us wherever we are, but in terms of refreshment, renewal, restoration, in terms of finding God in ways we can drink deeply of his wonderful being, you'd do better to look for him in the cry of the gull than the scream of the siren. God inhabits the world he made; his vibrancy permeates all creation. Location 1040

Nature heals, teaches, strengthens, soothes; it brings us the presence of God, for "The whole earth is filled with his glory" (Isaiah 6:3 NLT). Go let it restore your soul — daily, whenever possible. Location 1183

We are talking about finding more of God. I assure you nothing, absolutely nothing, will bring you more of him

than loving him. Turning our hearts toward God in love opens our being to receive him like no other practice. And it is a practice, something we consciously and actively engage in through the moments of our day-to-day. This is the epicenter of the book, really. The core truth from which all others flow. But I saved this chapter till now for several reasons. Location 1204

Life has a way of eroding our confidence in the goodness of God. What a ridiculous understatement; let me try again. Life is a savage assault, striking at random, poisoning our heart's assurance that God is good, or at least good toward us. This makes it so hard to find more of God, to receive him in fresh and wonderful ways into our being. So it's here we must seek healing, and now is a good time to do so. Location 1219

I'm really surprised that the human race expects God to pour himself and his blessings into their lives when he is not even the slightest priority, let alone a close and dear friend. Would you give the best of your life to people who couldn't care less whether or not you exist? God's outpouring of himself is conditional. I know, I know — we've been told all about the unconditional love of God. Absolutely — his grace is unconditional; his forgiveness is available to all. However, intimacy with him, the treasures of his presence, the outpouring of his vibrant being into our thirsty souls — that's for those who love him. Location 1235

Stay with me now. Your heart is the greatest treasure you have. Without a heart it's impossible to love, or receive love. Without a heart you can't possibly dream, hope, laugh, find courage. Without a heart you will never be happy. Your enemy knows this, knows he can use your suffering to both shut your heart down and turn you against God, if only subtly, in doubtful hurt. Listen to me carefully: You must not let him. You must guard your heart with everything you've got, especially in times of disappointment and pain. Your secret weapon against the enemy's hatred is to love God right then and there, in the midst of the sorrow, whatever it may be. Location 1283

We are here to make room in our souls for the God we love, clearing out debris, experiencing so much more of him. Notice that the older brother can't receive the father's generosity; he's closed off, curtained off, by his attention to Self. This is the hidden danger I spoke of: the stubborn life of the Self. The Exalted Me, unsubmitted and unsurrendered to the rule of Christ in me. Location 1412

Over time, throughout our lives, the Self stakes out its own territory within us to assure getting its own way, ordering our world to its likings. It has imbedded assumptions and privileges in our psyche; there is a momentum to its desires, motives, and presence in us. I call this the Self Life. It's the Self Life in us that so easily takes offense, enjoys taking offense. Location 1421

One of the great embarrassments of Christianity, something that distresses Christians and non – Christians alike, is the fact that people who have aligned themselves with Jesus Christ can still act in such vain, stupid, pompous, mean, and hateful ways. The simple explanation is, they've continued to operate from the Self Life. So when someone crosses them in some way, thwarts their politics, theology, personal ambitions, they feel no qualms about character assassination because their offended Self is at the helm. This also explains the great moral scandals in Christian leadership: There was a hold-out of the Self Life in them. Somewhere along the way, that Self said, It's time for something for me; I deserve to have this, and they have an affair, or embezzle funds, or far kinkier stuff. Some of these leaders may have been serving all those years out of genuine union with Christ, but a big part of their act was actually fueled by the Self Life, and it eventually took them down. Location 1434

Why would your Father say things like he will give you the desires of your heart, and please protect your heart because it is the spring of life in you, if what he wanted you to do was kill your desires and dreams? In the chapter on kindness we saw that Jesus never said we're supposed to hate ourselves, for how can we love our neighbor as ourselves if we hate ourselves? (The way you treat your heart is the way you will treat everyone

else's.) Jesus always handled broken and misguided people graciously and with a view toward their restoration. The Incarnation itself ought to remove every doubt that God loves and cherishes your humanity, because he took on humanity himself in order to redeem yours. Your personhood is not the problem; the issue is who is at the helm? What is fueling and motivating your faculties? Who gets to drive the bus? Location 1472

Make no room for offense. Given the social air we breathe, this is going to be enormously helpful. Whenever, wherever you see offense cropping up, crucify it — give it no hold. Now, I understand it may be utterly justified. People do offensive things; all those Eustaces out there are offensive. Cutting in on you at the market, taking your place in the theater, getting on social media and saying all kinds of terrible things. But the point is, you don't want to get caught up in it. Offense has no good ending. Location 1545

However you want to describe it, you turn over the Self Life every morning. Deny it, abandon it, ignore it. Let God be your God; let Jesus be your operational Lord. Take up your cross daily. It's an utter relief. Free yourself from the culture of comparison, envy, and the offended Self by unplugging from the matrix of the internet whenever possible. Why swim in that stuff? Pray for other people's success — this really puts down the Self Life in us. When talking with someone, don't secretly wait your turn. Be present to them; let the focus remain on them until they ask about you. Even if they never do. Worship. Really. Make a regular practice of putting on some worship music and lifting up Jesus. And for the purposes of finding God, as we turn over the Self to him, we also ask for more of God. Pull back the curtain of Self, and God is right there. The relief will astonish you. Location 1563

Helpful: Generous amounts of sunshine. Everything living and green. Long walks. Lonesome country roads. Swimming. Beauty. Music. Water. Friendly dogs. (I've never understood it when someone says to me, "Yeah — we're not really dog people." That's like saying, "Yeah — we're not really happiness people.") Compassion. Not expecting myself to produce the same level of work I normally accomplish in a day. Yard work. Building a fence. Unhelpful: Grocery stores. Malls. Television. Traffic. Draining people wanting to talk to me. (Friends and family are at this moment wondering if they fall into this category. It's reserved for people who live out of touch with their own soul — and thus mine. "The way you treat your own heart.") Airports. The news — especially politics. Social media. Your typical dose of movie violence. Location 1699

My friends, I really don't want to be the unwelcome prophet, but the fact is this: life is not going to get better on this planet. It's going to get worse before it gets better; all signs indicate it's getting worse at an alarming rate. "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12: 5). In other words, if you think this is hard, wait'll you see what's coming next. We're going to want our souls strong and ready for the days ahead, filled with God, not fried and empty. So we must practice soul care. Location 1708

Allow your soul to feel. Don't tell it what to feel; it knows what to do. Just give it permission. It might be anger at first, or it might be sadness, loneliness, why bother? You might find yourself shouting some profanities — that's okay. Your losses matter. Don't edit yourself into silence. Location 1724

Lest we despair, God has given us "a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29: 11 NLT) and to be quite specific, it includes the restoration of every precious day of our lives. Heaven is not a memory wipe. It is the time and capacity to truly relish the story of our lives, to see the hand of God in it all (how many times angels rescued you), to be vindicated, and even rewarded. Location 1816

Your story matters. Your story will not be lost. But I wrote more fully about that in a book entitled All Things New, so I will only mention it here. All good things do not come to an end. Not even close. Location 1824

Forgetfulness is a spiritual pandemic ravaging humanity, with dangerous and lethal repercussions. This is why God strikes the bells to "remember" so often in the Old and New Testaments: Only be careful, and watch

yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. (Deuteronomy 4: 9) Location 1867

Here's a redemptive use of your phone — it's a library of memories in photos. Pull out your phone during a break, but instead of checking the news feed, browse your photos, let them take you back into precious moments. Linger there, savor the gift. Location 1898

Unplugging helps because the war on our attention — that daily barrage of input and media, the constant fire hose of " stuff " from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, Yahoo, and YouTube, plus the news and the texts you receive and email and memos at work — wages a war on our souls, and one of the immediate casualties is belief. We forget who we are, we forget who God is, we forget what he has spoken to us, we forget we live in a world at war. The news rarely reports on the wonderful things God is doing in the world. Evil loves to make it seem like it's winning, and it can feel that way if you spend time online. Pulling out to focus on Jesus and fix our eyes on him is healing for belief. Location 2069

Those of you familiar with a liturgical worship model will now recognize the wisdom of the church for putting the Apostle's Creed in the weekly service: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; on the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Location 2076

The typical progression of the Christian life presented in most church settings, Bible studies, Christian books, and conferences unfolds like this: faith, obedience, service. We begin with an encounter with Christ, perhaps in our childhood — we went to summer camp, we heard a salvation message, we attended a Billy Graham movie. We start with simple faith, a beginning. It's usually a very exciting season, whether you're eight, eighteen, or eighty-eight. Over time — if we are maturing — simple faith moves beyond Jesus only as Savior to include Jesus as Lord. We move toward a life of obedience to this God who has saved us. We begin to clean up our act; some of our recreational activities and media choices change. We want to know and follow God's will for our life. This is a good thing; a human being cannot become what human beings were meant to be without this life of obedience. Next comes the stage of participation: "Come and be a part of this!" We might be recruited or we might hear an inspiring message inviting us to serve. Come and teach, build orphanages, share your faith. We move from being receivers in the church environment to those who are helping out. The goal in this popular model of Christian formation is faithful servants. We believe Christ, we obey Christ, we serve Christ in some way. I would venture to say that most dear, beautiful followers of Jesus have not been told there is anything beyond this. Location 2162

Faithful servants do not enjoy a regular experience of deep intimacy with God. (I can speak candidly about this because I've counseled so many of them over the years.) They rarely, if ever, hear him speak to them personally. They are not benefiting from the restoration of their souls; inner healing would not be part of their experience. They are faithful servants, but they're pretty much stuck there. The Good News, literally, is that there is so much more! Location 2172

Human beings are like downed trees, scattered here and there by the hurricanes of this world. We are uprooted. This world does violence on the soul in so many ways, and I haven't spoken much at all about the kingdom of darkness and its evil powers. The primary goal of the enemy is to keep you from union with God. His puppet, the world, prevents union simply by keeping you distracted and haggard. Running on fumes. But then there are the assaults, trauma, chronic disappointment, shock, and loss — these things strike at our union

with terrible force. We are pulled apart from God, down at the roots. We feel the effects, but we might not be aware of what's happening. Location 2222

Augustine described the whole life of the Christian as a holy longing. Your heart is going to grow for the kingdom, more and more as you mature, which allows us to receive more and more of God and enjoy so much more of the life he's giving. But this can be very disorienting if you don't understand what's taking place within you. Just as you reach a place where you feel satisfied, it seems you need more. That's because your soul is expanding, which is a very good thing. Location 2392

I'm afraid it's true. The withering effects of our frenzied culture, the narrowing of mind and soul by technology, not to mention the heartbreak of the world delivered daily to smartphones, and the trauma of those in crisis around us. No time to attend to disappointments, losses, griefs. Much less cultivating precious hopes and dreams. All that's been pushed aside. Behind it all, the Great War with evil is raging, more bitter than ever. Most folks live their lives in a state of harried dullness, trench warfare, the Maginot Line. The light is fading from their eyes; their life reduced to a moment-by-moment getting by. Location 2416

Dear friends, I hope you see clearly now that more of God is our greatest need, our greatest joy, our only rescue. This isn't optional. He's the source of the strength and resiliency we need for this hour, the Life that allows us to enjoy everything else in life. Location 2423

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.