



P **TWELVE**
PILLARS

A Novel by

Jim Rohn

and **Chris Widener**

What others are saying about Jim Rohn...

“I truly believe Jim Rohn is an extraordinary human being whose philosophy can enhance the quality of life for anyone who exposes themselves to it. He certainly had a positive impact on me at a time in my life when I was first forming the philosophies that guide me today.”

—Anthony Robbins, author of *Awaken the Giant Within*

“Jim Rohn is the master motivator—he has style, substance, charisma, relevance, charm, and what he says makes a difference and it sticks. I consider Jim the ‘Chairman of Speakers.’ The world would be a better place if everyone heard my friend, Jim Rohn.”

—Mark Victor Hansen, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

“Jim Rohn is a national treasure and one of the most sought-after success experts ever. Why? Because his ideas work. They have worked so well that nearly an entire generation of personal development trainers claim Jim as a mentor or a key influence.”

—Vic Conant, President of Nightingale-Conant

“I’ve been a student of Jim Rohn since 1972. He was then—and still is—one of the most profound thinkers and mind-expanding individuals I’ve ever had a chance to listen to.”

—Les Brown, author of *Choosing Your Future*

“Jim Rohn is one of the most articulate, powerful, thought-provoking speakers I’ve seen. His unique delivery and style puts him head and shoulders above the rest.”

—Harvey Mackay, author of *Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*

“Jim is a modern-day Will Rogers. His perceptions of achievement and success have launched thousands of people on a wonderful, life-changing

voyage into success and happiness. I can't recommend too strongly that you experience Jim Rohn personally."

—Tom Hopkins, author of *How to Master the Art of Selling*

What others are saying about Chris Widener...

“Chris was very challenging and enriching. The leadership principles that he spoke on were at the very core of what we are trying to accomplish here on the HBS campus. Chris taught us the tenets of true leadership and how to immediately apply those truths in our own leadership situation. I would encourage everyone to learn from Chris Widener’s Extraordinary Leaders seminar!”

—John Lunde, Harvard Business School, Student Leader, MBA

“I have spoken to more than 3,000 audiences, and I can tell you that Chris Widener is one of the best speakers in America today. He has wonderful content—extremely motivational, he is funny, he is sharp, he is quick and to the point. You’ll love him, too.”

—Brian Tracy, author of *Eat That Frog*

“Our people loved Chris and loved his material. He was extremely helpful and challenging. My sales team and I highly recommend him!”

—Phil Castillo, Director, Northern Channels, Cisco Systems

“Chris Widener has the talent, the articulation, the message, the presence, the ability! Chris Widener is one of the brand-new top stars on the international platform speaking circuit today.”

—Denis Waitley, author of *Seeds of Greatness*

“Chris Widener is a powerful presenter, a quick wit, and a home run every time. He definitely challenges you to the next level in life and work.”

—Kevin Mather, CFO, MLB’s Seattle Mariners

“Chris Widener is nothing short of phenomenal—his patience, his knowledge, his ability to engage with an audience. Chris, you do an amazing job.”

—Jim Rohn, author of *The Five Major Pieces to the Life Puzzle*

P T W E L V E P I L L A R S

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TWELVE PILLARS

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Dedication

To Jim Rohn for giving of himself for so many years to so many people as he has traveled the world and developed the ideas that are shared within.

To Kyle Wilson and the extremely talented and dedicated staff at Jim Rohn International, for being the backbone of this project that made it possible. Hilary and Yveatte, your help on this book was invaluable!

To my wife, Lisa, and our four children for being such a fantastic family and the joy of my life!

—Chris Widener

To Chris Widener for his collaboration in taking this story of Twelve Pillars from concept to print, and all that goes in between. Chris, you are the next generation. Keep sharing your story, living, and teaching the principles of success and impacting lives.

To Kyle Wilson and the staff at JRI, including Hilary Overpeck, Charles Moore, Crystal Prince, Yveatte Moore, Mary Haviland, Greg Anderson, and the entire gang, for all you've done over the years and continue to do in spreading my message across the globe each day.

To the readers of my weekly e-zine, those who have purchased my books and audios and attended my seminars, you are my "why"... why I keep traveling and sharing the philosophies of success—to hear your stories, triumphs, and successes.

And to my family, thank you for graciously allowing me the time I spend away from you to travel the globe and share the philosophies and principles that impacted my life so many years ago. You inspire me!

—Jim Rohn

Preface by Chris Widener

One of the greatest compliments ever paid to me was from a friend who said that the lessons on life and leadership that I teach are “timeless truths rather than vogue content.” I believe that there are core principles of success, universal and timeless truths that men and women of every generation can apply to their lives that will help them succeed in every area of their lives.

This is why I am such a great admirer of Jim Rohn and so highly privileged to be able to coauthor *Twelve Pillars* with him—it teaches the timeless truths of one of our generation’s master motivators. Jim has traveled the world for over forty years teaching the principles and philosophies associated with the Twelve Pillars of Success. It is my honor to join him in putting those lessons into a fictional account so that future generations can glean the wisdom Jim has shared with people all over the globe.

Recognized in the 1980’s and 1990’s as America’s foremost business philosopher, Jim Rohn’s message has continued into the twenty-first century impacting millions of lives throughout the world, including many of the most respected business people, speakers, and writers. When he received the National Speakers Association’s Master of Influence Award—the speaking profession’s highest honor—in the summer of 2004, I realized just how influential Jim’s words have been in shaping the thoughts and ideas of those who, in turn, shape the thoughts and ideas of millions of people everywhere.

So, whether this is your first introduction to Jim Rohn or if you have heard or read his works before, I invite you to sit down and enjoy his lessons in the form of the Twelve Pillars of Success. They are indeed timeless truths that, if you follow them, will surely lead you to a better life. As you reflect on each lesson, ask yourself how you may apply these truths in your own life. Turn these ideas into action, and they will change your life and career in ways you could never imagine.

Enjoy!

Chris Widener

Preface by Jim Rohn

I am often asked by those who attend my seminars, why, at my age, I keep traveling the globe, speaking and teaching. My answer is simply this: to leave a legacy.

Imagine with me, for a moment, if you will, long after I am gone, someone up in an attic somewhere going through a box of dusty, old books. They find one of mine, and something about the cover compels them to open it. Blowing off the dust, they idly thumb through the pages, until a sentence catches their eye and they begin to read. And as they read, the words leap off the page at them with life-changing principles, simple yet compelling, giving them the vision of who they can be, what they can become, a life they can design and dreams they can accomplish. In that moment, when a light dawns, miracles happen! That is my “why.”

With this in mind, Chris Widener and I present to you, *Twelve Pillars*. We’ve attempted to blend together the fundamental principles and teachings I’ve been sharing for over 40 years, and weave them into a unique tapestry of a fictional account of three characters: Michael, Charlie, and Mr. Davis.

My hope (and Chris’s) is that as you read this book, these Pillars will become the foundation upon which you build your current and future success and achievement. But then I ask you to take it one step further. As you master these Pillars of Success, take them and create your own legacy as you then in turn teach and train others in the same way, so that you, too, may have the exploding satisfaction that you’ve used your gifts wisely, that you’ve blessed yourself, your family, community, and your business along this journey that life sets before us all.

To your success!

Jim Rohn

1: A Chance Encounter

“The only way things are going to change for you is when you change.”

“Crud!”

His hand hit the dashboard as he said it. “I can’t stand this car!”

That about sums up Michael Jones’s life—crud. And... he can’t stand it.

Forty years old, a wife of fifteen years he doesn’t know how to connect with, and two kids he barely knows. Add to that a boring job that doesn’t challenge him and hardly pays the bills. In a word: crud.

Where had his life gone? Out of college, he and his wife, Amy, had been so filled with dreams. Their lives were ahead of them and nothing seemed impossible. They were full of potential and wanted to do so much. But now they were nowhere near where they had hoped to be.

Michael loved Amy, but it just wasn’t what it could be. They had grown apart through the years, and he had no idea how to fix it. The kids are great but, again, there was just no connection with them like he thought “normal” families should have.

And his job... definitely not what he wanted. A man his age making \$40,000 a year with no upside? This was hardly what he had imagined for his life. It was what it was, and it seemed like he was stuck—stuck with a dead-end job and poor relationships. This wasn’t the success and happiness he and Amy had planned for.

But his life was about to change...

This car is the worst, he thought as it convulsed and finally died. Going about 30 miles an hour when it stopped running, he guided it as it coasted to a stop along the road.

He was on his way to a sales call and he had never taken this road before. It was a long, winding road that acted as a shortcut between two major roads. Not many houses on *this* road, he observed.

After the car rolled to a stop, Michael got out and walked around the car. It wasn't as though he would be able to tell what was wrong from walking around, he knew zero about cars. He knew how to put gas in it, turn the key over and that was about it. *No smoke*, he thought, *and that had to be good*.

He popped the hood and looked at the engine. All the wires seemed connected. All the caps were on. He didn't have any idea what to do.

I should have taken shop class in high school, he thought.

Michael reached inside his jacket for his cell phone. He figured he would call a mechanic friend he knew and see if he could get some help. He flipped the phone open and saw the worst—no cell coverage there!

“Just my luck,” he said out loud. “They can put a man on the moon and clone a sheep, but they can't put a cell site up where I need it.”

He looked around trying to decide which way to start walking. Up ahead about 200 feet was a bend in the road and he couldn't see what was farther on so he decided to go that way, just hoping there might be a house beyond the bend.

As he walked, he kicked the gravel along the road.

Frustrated, alone, and stuck. That's how he felt right now. About this situation and life in general.

As he turned the corner, Michael came across something he had never seen in real life before. Sure, he had seen many in magazines and on TV, but never something like this with his own eyes.

Nice pad. Michael found himself standing in front of the most beautiful home he had ever seen. “Home” may not even be the right word for it. Right at the roadside was a huge gated entrance.

The large brick and wrought-iron fence stretched at least 500 feet along the roadside. And the gate was at least 10 feet high. Behind the gate was a house that had to be over 10,000 square feet. It was a white plantation-style that had twelve two-story pillars across the front—which made sense since the sign at the side of the gate said, “Twelve Pillars.” It was magnificent. Michael stood in front of the gate for a few minutes, just looking in awe at the structure.

Finally he snapped back to reality and realized that he had to get his car fixed. He didn’t see any other houses nearby, but he didn’t know how to get to the house in front of him either.

Just then he saw an old man in white overalls emerge from what looked like a workshop just to the right of the driveway. The old man walked toward the gate.

When he got about 25 feet from the gate, the old man spoke, “Can I help you, young man?”

“Uh, yeah. I mean, I hope so. My car broke down, and I can’t call anyone because my cell phone doesn’t work out here. Can I borrow a phone?”

“Well, why don’t you let me take a look at the car first? Maybe I can fix it.”

The old man was about seventy, Michael figured. About 5 feet 11 inches. Medium build. Pretty good shape, it looked like. He was obviously the caretaker for the mansion.

The old man opened the gate with a push of a button on a remote he pulled from his overalls.

When he walked through, he asked Michael where the car was.

“Just back around the bend,” he said, pointing back down the road.

The old man stuck his hand out and introduced himself. “Charlie’s my name. What’s yours?”

“Michael. Nice to meet you.”

As they walked, Charlie prodded for more information. “What kind of business are you in?” “Sales.”

“You make a good living at that?”

“No, not really.”

The old man was silent for a moment and then asked, “Do you have a wife and kids?”

“Yes, a wife and two kids.”

“Well, that’s good.”

When they reached the car, Charlie popped the hood and looked around, fiddling with wires.

“Let me try to start her,” Charlie said.

Michael gave Charlie the keys, and he turned it over a few times, but it wouldn’t start. The gas gauge read $\frac{1}{2}$, but Charlie suspected that it was broken and the problem was that Michael was out of gas.

“Well, everything seems to be in order, so I am betting that you are out of gas and your gas gauge is just broken. Let’s go get some gas from the workshop.”

Michael didn’t think that could possibly be the problem, but he had no other options at this point, so he said, “Okay, let’s do it.”

They began to walk back to the workshop together. As they passed through the gates, Michael asked about the house and owner. “So, who owns the house?”

“One Mr. Davis owns that house. Built it twenty years ago with his wife. Very successful businessman. Owns a bunch of different businesses—he has his hands in a lot of different things.”

“Must be quite successful. How big is the house?”

“Fourteen thousand square feet in the main house. You can’t see it, but there is a pool and pool house that is about 4,000 square feet and a 1,500-square-foot guest cottage in back.”

“Wow,” Michael replied. “He must have a lot of money.”

“Yep, it’s something alright. But Mr. Davis isn’t just about money. He prides himself on being successful in everything in life. Life is more than just money.”

“That’s easy to say if you have some,” Michael said.

“I can see that, but Mr. Davis was successful before he got his money. In fact, do you see those pillars along the front of the house? Each one represents a different area of success that Mr. Davis says is important for life. He built the house that way to represent his philosophy on life.”

“Oh yeah? That’s pretty cool, I guess.”

Just then, they arrived at the workshop.

“Would you like a cup of coffee?” Charlie asked. “I just brewed a pot before I saw you standing at the gate.”

“Sure, I’ll take a cup.”

Michael looked around. The workshop was almost as big as his house. It had every tool you could possibly imagine.

“How do you like it?”

“Oh, black, thanks,” Michael replied.

Charlie poured the cup and then brought it to him. “There you go.”

“Thanks.” Michael took a sip and looked out the window at the main house. “I sure would love to be that successful.”

“I am sure you could be if you wanted to,” Charlie said.

“Well, I have given it my best shot the last 18 years, and it doesn’t seem to have done much.” “You’ve worked hard, have you?” Charlie asked.

“I have worked very hard—harder than most. I work long hours, work overtime, everything.”

“That may be your problem,” Charlie suggested.

“Working hard is a problem?” Michael asked, looking confused.

“No, working hard isn’t a problem in and of itself, but Mr. Davis always says that the first Pillar of Success is to work harder on yourself than you do on your job.”

“I don’t get it,” Michael said.

“Mr. Davis has those twelve Pillars of Success I was telling you about. The first one he talks about is Personal Development. Success comes when you develop yourself beyond where you currently are. So you have to work harder on yourself—improving yourself—than you do on your job.”

“But I was always told that if you work hard, keep your nose to the grindstone, and eventually you will get ahead. That isn’t true?”

“Not exactly. You see, you will get the job in a company—and the salary that goes with it—that you deserve because of the level of skill you have. So you can work as hard as you want, long hours and everything, but as long as you stay at the same skill level, you will never go beyond that level of pay and promotion.” “So how do I get ahead?”

“You start working on yourself.”

“Maybe I don’t get it yet,” Michael said, taking another sip of coffee.

“Okay, let me explain,” Charlie offered. “You say you’re in sales, right?”

“Yep.”

“Okay, you make a certain amount of money based on how good a salesman you are. You can work harder and harder, but you will only make so much because you are only so good. The key is to become a *better salesman*. The way to do that is not to put in five more hours of work on your job. It is to start putting more work into yourself, Michael. Work harder on yourself than you do on your job.”

“So how do I do that?”

“Read books, attend seminars, study the best salespeople. And then apply the information. Implement what you learn. Work on integrating