

# **Don't Push The Button And Start The Film**

**A talk by Vernon Howard given on 11-22-78**

**(First few minutes of open conversation not transcribed.)**

I don't know of a single thing, not a single thing, that prevents you from waking up. That is, being in a state of capital-U Understanding, right now! I don't know of a single reality. What I do know is your present low level of understanding is *nice* to you. "I don't have to do a thing, all I have to do is follow." See, you won't dare lead yourself into a different kind of reaction to the challenge out there or the challenge in here.

Shall I tell you what you are? You might want to write this down. I'll tell you what you are. If you are suffering, if you're confused, if you are scared of anything – I'll tell you what you are. Write this down. This will answer all your questions, including the one about depression. "I am a memory-worshipper." Right?

What else do you have to live from except the accumulation of everything you've ever thought before ten to seven on this Wednesday evening? Go ahead tell me. You can't tell me. All you know what to do is what you've always done. You think the way you always think. You feel the way you always feel. And what is that? A consultation of memory.

You look to it – it's just as if you have a whole bunch of films inside your life and, as a matter of fact, it has been recording there just like a film. All these films when the challenge comes up from the outer world no matter what it is – I don't care what it is – when the challenge comes up you press a switch to run that particular film of how to act, because if you didn't press that button and start the film rolling that tells you how to act, you wouldn't know what to do.

You tell me what would be wrong with not knowing what to do to a psychological challenge? Not a practical one on the daily level. You know what to do if your house is on fire. Or if there is no food in your cupboard. You know what to do about that on the practical level. You tell me why you have to go into the memory vault and think at all when the challenge comes up.

Why do you think at all about it? Why don't you stay so awake that you know that the consultation of memory is just another form of self-worship. Memory worship is self-worship. You know what is going to happen if you press that button and start this film running – the film that says behave this way or that way. You know what's going to happen and what you know is going to happen is the reactivation of your memory-self.

Can you believe that this is the only thing that is of concern to us? That we press the button and it doesn't make any difference if we press the wrong one. Doesn't make any difference if I press this one, that one, that one, as long as I press some button to activate the picture frames, the fast running picture frames in which I am the center of the film.

And you press those films – any of them – and it is going to lead you into destruction. It is going to lead you into destruction because all films are in time, are they not? And time is going to come to an end for you and for me. What do you think happens to all these films that you've stored up for all these years when you die? What do you think is going to happen to them?

I'll tell you, you know better than the Christians or the Zen Buddhists, or the Islamites. If you're relying on that to get you through, not only tomorrow, but fifty years from now, sixty years from now. We'll make it a hundred and then we are all included in it. A lot less than that probably. What are you relying on to hold you together tomorrow? The film.

Try sometime not pressing the button and sitting back and seeing what happens if you don't, if you don't activate the memory film, if you don't activate yourself, see what happens. I tell you what, nothing bad can happen to you ever ever ever again – nothing. If you refuse to poke this and say, "I should get jealous. I should get anxious. I should get..."

I don't – I don't care what you have brought on yourself! Through all these years of storing up the negative films, one refusal to press the button and it is just as if it never existed in your life. The film has hours in it, it has days, and it has very emotionalized activities in it. If you don't press the button what is the use of having the film at all? No use calling on it. It can't take you anywhere.

The reason the film can't take you anywhere because there is no one there to be taken anywhere. There is no future for you! Do you know that you have no future? There is no future for you because you don't exist outside of the every little frame that runs through the film camera that you turn on and watch yourself.

Something comes up in the day, in your day, which is a problem to you, a crisis to you. Because you are a robot, nothing more than a robot with all these films inside your head, you say, "I must press that real fast to protect myself." And the very act of protecting yourself is the very thing that harms you! But we don't know it! We don't understand it! And there is no way that the film can understand itself. All I can do is go through the same grim experiences all day and all night for years and years and years. And quote mark, quote mark, "know" that there is no other life to live.

I am looking out at a room full of human beings, of men and women of various ages, various experiences. I am wondering if there is – I'm wondering if there is one of you in this room who has the audacity to not press the button anymore, to catch your hand.

Look. Someone made a sarcastic remark to you. Someone doesn't like you anymore. And your protective device of reaching the hand out to press the button for the proper film to make you feel good, to make you feel okay, to make yourself feel protected. You can watch the hand go out and start to press the anger button, the withdrawal button, the bashful button – whatever. You can watch your hand if you're watching carefully, you can watch it actually go out – inside of your head, of course – and press down the button that you think is going to help you, avoid getting hurt, maybe.

I have given you in just a few minutes the whole secret of changing yourself inwardly. What happens is that your reactions go so fast! Bang! You're gone before you know it. And someone says to you, "Why didn't you watch yourself so you could slow down your reaction of pushing the self-protective button," – which is not self-protective but harmful. "Why didn't you watch yourself?" And already you press another real fast.

You are embarrassed by the fact that weren't adequate, that someone gave you a lesson and you couldn't remember it. And your shame or embarrassment at getting caught presses another button. "Oh, I am so dumb!" See, you just pressed another button.

There is no life in the film. There is no individual in the film. Furthermore there is no need for you or for me to have a film at all to run, or to record experiences, except for practical purpose of learning about how to cook dinner – knowing how to cook dinner. Why do you use your mind for anything except that?

What is this mass of accumulations that have been piled into our minds all these years that we begin to believe in their necessity? And you believe in the necessity for being scared. How many of you are scared? Raise your hands every one of you.

Why do you come here class after class – and I tell you class after class – look, this lady and this lady and this man and this man, there is no need for you to be apprehensive over anything. Why don't you investigate what I am saying instead of believing in the film? Instead of looking at it and saying, "That's what I have always known, therefore it must be right." What is popular is not always right. What is familiar is not what is good for you. What is the easiest thing to do, like press the button, is the exact opposite of what is good for you.

The trouble is – the trouble is, you see, your memories are you. Watch the connection I am going to make now. All your memories of your past, psychological memories, mental memories connected with a supposed self – they are you! If all your psychological memories were to be taken away, *you* would cease to exist. Yet you would exist in eternity!

See, I can't say *you* without you activating a film even as I am talking. And I see the problem. I see it quite clearly. But I have to use words, you, but when I use the word you, you take it as being real. I am using the word *you* consciously, as far as I'm concerned, but you're taking it unconsciously to think that I am talking about you as the bundle of memories, you as the vault, you as the film. I know that it's a fake. I know that it's not you.

Don't you kid me when you tell me you come here to get rid of your troubles, to get rid of your heartache, to get rid of your tears, to get rid of your fears. I know better, because I know that you have identified with your memories, which makes you a self-worshipper. And if you are worshipping yourself, if that's what you love which you do, all lost people are self-lovers. They're loving an illusion about themselves at that!

If you are loving yourself and close your eyes while doing it, which you are,

how are you going to see through the illusion that what you are looking at is nothing but a film? You take my word for it. It's nothing but a mental film that goes through your mind. And when you don't know how to behave, instead of sitting there with no reaction at all you press a button real fast in order to protect the whole vault. You say, "Look man, I lived twenty, forty, eighty years and you're asking me to give all that up?"

Listen, listen to the question. "You're asking me to give all that up?" Yes! I'm asking you to give up hell, which is time, in favor of eternity which is timeless. That is what you are asked to give up.

Something comes up, something came up today, something that threatened to disturb your "ha ha" peace of mind. Something came up and without knowing what you did, you reached for the proper button to push, to keep, to get the proper film going to make yourself the center of the reaction. You want to be the center of the reaction which is you, which is your withdrawal, which is your anger, which is your jealousy and so on.

I'm asking you to be so alert from now on, for the rest of your life, that when someone looks at you angrily, you get a crank phone call, you get bad news either from out there or in here – I am asking you to stay so awake that you refuse to reach your hand out to press one of the buttons.

Because if you can even start to do this you will see as your hand, mental hand, psychological hand, reaches out to press the right button – you hope. And there are so many you know, bang, bang, bang, it is very haphazard. As the hand reaches out to press the one that's going to make you feel good, or recover from the hurt or whatever, you see it moving and something in you that is developing says this room-high "No" that we are talking about, that we've talked about.

All right. The hand is going to travel from here to about here where the button is ready to be pushed. The problem comes up, someone says something cutting about you, whatever. You see the hand come up. Oh, it goes – I am slowing it down in slow motion, am I not? It goes so very fast like lightening.

But you are watchful and you see the hand getting ready to go over here and press the button because you have been criticized and now you are doubtful that you exist as, say the adequate nice intelligent person – you've been criticized. And feeling doubts about your own existence you start the hand over to press any button – you don't care what one is running because any of them keeps you in the center of the film. It's the angry one, or, "Don't you talk to me that way..." Or the sullen one, or the tearful one. You don't care which one as long as you're the center of them. You're the center of every one of them. It doesn't make any difference – you can't lose.

Follow now. So you're very alert, very watchful and you see the hand start to go over and press the button. Now remember, it's your work! You have to do it! And when it gets halfway over there is something in you that says, "No!" When this Voice, capital V – when this Voice with a capital V says, "No," halfway over to the button you habitually push it will shake. It will vibrate. It will go like, (gestures), won't it? I see some of you nodding. You

must have been doing it. It will go like that and it will shake you. And you won't know what is going on, but I am telling you this is what is known as a new experience.

This is not an experience that is going to be registered only in the memory, but in a higher – only in the old type of memory with its mechanical rules which has its place – but in a higher type of memory, a work memory, you can call it that. So that tomorrow or hopefully an hour later, ten minutes later, five minutes later, one minute later, when the hand comes over, you see the jolt again, right? You see the jolt and remember the previous jolt and you remember this jolt and you begin to get real scared.

Do you know why, by the way? I hope you're following it. Do you know why you're going to get scared when the jolt happens?

Come on now, you should be able to figure it out. All right. The hand comes over originally to hit the film. The jolt comes right here and because something higher than memory is now interceding, operating, you get the jolt over the stoppage of it and your fear will mount. Now careful, real careful now. Your fear begins to mount because, "Here, here I'm nobody. If I can just go over here I am okay. See, I know who I am. I'm that hot head. I don't know who I am here!"

Boy, I tell you if you ever get to this point – again don't miss a class. You need all the help you can get or you'll get lost at this point. What you have to understand is the fear of not reaching yourself is a sneaky cunning film in itself that has sneaked into the operation – and I can only carry the illustration of this so far and it breaks down – has sneaked in and said, "If you don't press the button you will be extinguished."

So everything depends upon every time you catch the hand getting over, reaching over, stay so alert that you not only feel the jolt, the nervousness of this new experience; but can detect the lie that is ready to follow it, pounce on it and whisper in your ear, "This new experience is danger. Don't do it again! Don't listen to a talk that tells you about this. Don't come back to a class like this. Block your ears even while sitting here."

And I want to tell all of you here something – and all of you listening to this tape. You are unaware as I am talking to you now that you have had, right now, three minutes ago, two minutes ago, one minute ago, you have had this experience that I talked about – of getting to a certain understanding of what I am saying and then unconscious – because you are unconscious about everything, you know. Except you stubbed your toe and that hurts physically and then you remember that.

But you're unconscious of everything that goes on inside of you. So you don't know, but I know, that when I explain this to you that this was happening inside you. What happened inside you was what I just explained to you. That the fear of being nobody crept into the situation and told you, "Don't do that again. Don't go that far. Don't explore like that. Don't listen to a talk like that."

Listen, I am telling you what is talking to you is Death! Death in the form of

the film that says, "All you have ever had is the mechanical repetition of your daily reactions and experiences. This – " and it says your name, Jim, Dolphin, it says your name, "this is your life and the devil is trying to steal it away from you." The devil whispers to you because you don't know the devil yet, you don't know yourself yet. The devil whispers to you and says, "The devil is trying to take away your life. Don't listen to it! I am god!"

Boy, I'll tell you, do you know what you're getting now? The devil whispers to you, says, "I am god. Follow me, worship me, stick with me. If you listen to this teaching that you've been hearing you will die."

I am going to tell you that you are dead now. Everyone of you is a dead human being seated in this room. What do you think of that? And I am telling you that here you can learn to know that you're dead – which you are. You have no life. All you have is mechanical parts activated on a certain – in a certain way from a higher source. God is the author of all life including the physical life of the body and of the trees and of the sun. God is the author of that, but you have not permitted God, Truth, Reality to give you anymore than the life in the flesh.

Now most certainly you have that. You walk and you talk but this is all there is and that's not your life. It's not your life, because it will come to an end with the death of the physical body. Now if that's all you want for your life, then you can settle for that. I'll tell you, you know there is something that brings you to these meetings time after time that says, "I want more than this living death that I've existed in up to this point." Correct?

All right, then we are talking and discussing with the right people and the right topics. If I can be lied to, who is doing it? Who is lying to me? Let's find out. You see were back where we started. Who is lying to me is the film. The devil is time, repetition, unconsciousness. There is no life in a film, no life at all.

Part of the film, one of the films is called a fear reaction. Right? Being frightened, being scared. This film is one of the most important for you to activate unconsciously, unknown to yourself.

Get this, as you come to this class and begin to wake up. Because what comes into this room far from being a whole-hearted attempt to wake up is this tiny little person, this wandering person, this cosmic curiosity that comes in here and says, "Boy, I'll tell you. I may not be honest with the rest of the people in this class and I can't even be honest with myself, but my feeling is honest! I can feel that I don't know. I can feel that I don't even want to know. Ninety-nine and nine-tenths of me doesn't even want to know."

So even as you're sitting, look, look you're lying to me. Bang, bang, bang. As I am talking to you now, I know it! You are lying to yourself. That means that the devil in the form of fear is telling you, "Be careful of what you accept, of what you absorb. And be very especially careful that you don't go into practical action with any of these things you are given here."

For example, if during the break or if tomorrow you see another person that

you don't know how to behave toward, you are afraid of them or whatever. You feel they dominate you and can hurt you in some way. The devil will say to you, "Press the button that will seem to give you life." But the button you push will be the button of death – always. Because all buttons are that way.

Because you are not awake you will press that button and then feeling afraid, feeling terrified is your life. Feeling terrified is your death that you listen to the devil call life and you say, "I am shaking and I am vibrating and I know what to do about the challenge. Which is to be afraid and get as many associated actions with that as I can. When I am afraid, run away! Always run away! Never face anything."

Why don't you go up to someone you're afraid of. Right in this room! How many of you are afraid of another person in this room? Raise your hands – all of you. Why don't you go up to that person and say, "Good evening." (Laughter) Hmm?

Are you aware that you are not doing this? I didn't say you like to do it, I said to do it! It's no concern of yours what they do. Do you understand that? What concern is it of yours how they react to what you do. Hmm?

That boss – look – that boss just bawled you out for that bad work you did and your temptation is to sulk, to start to criticize him, to stay away as much as possible. You want to destroy death? I tell you how to do it. You walk up to the boss and talk to him about the error that was made. Just explore it. Maybe you were wrong, maybe he was wrong. What difference – how long are you going to live on this earth? What do you care about that!

Please. What do you care what you have to go through as long as you go through it and destroy it. You are afraid of the boss and you are afraid of everyone else because you hide out. And the hiding out is the pressing of one of the films. "I feel safe sitting back and getting mad at him." And explaining why he was unjust to you. Someday it will suddenly occur to you right in the middle of your day what you are doing – what you are doing by *thinking!* What you are doing against your eternity by thinking.

Listen to what I just said. Thinking, thinking, thinking. Driving yourself crazy. Right? Now you think about this. You are not going to find the answer that you are looking for – part of you is looking for – in thinking.

You have believed it. You have believed it all your life. You got these – how many schemes do you have going on in your mind to get something from someone else. How many little plots you got to win a victory in this social world? How many phone calls do you make? How many letters do you write in order to make yourself feel as if you are going somewhere and accomplishing something. Or, to the contrary, how much mental seclusion and cowardice do you engage in in order to hide out from facing the facts, from facing the world.

You can go through this life meeting all challenges. If it is necessary to think, to consult one of the films in order to repair the broken roof, then you consult the film. And it will tell you to get hammer and get nails and a piece of repair material for your roof. Now you won't get wet during the rainy

weather.

You don't know that there is a higher source of consultation other than the one you've consulted to repair the roof, because this is all you've ever known. What you do know is psychological consultation with the films in which you must do one of two things in every situation: conquer or be defeated. And even defeated is acceptable to you because then you can cry, right? You can cry and you are the center of that film.

Here we are at the point we always arrive at in these talks where you have to begin to do something different! Where you have to stop getting excited over gifts people give you, over flatteries people give you, over the fact that they phone you and write you letters and give you public honors. Y

ou're going to have to give up that kind of thinking. You're also going to have to go to the opposite of that to give up the thinking in which you get disappointed over anything. If there is no self there, how is there a self to be disappointed or to be elated? I am telling you, you're living a life of death and you don't know it.

And you are so stupid – I look out at this room and I see human beings in this class who miss meetings over the weeks, over the months, and I know in spite of the incredible information you've been given tonight you'll probably do it again. In spite of me calling you stupid, you'll do it again. You'll do it again! You'll do it again. You won't listen.

No one – no one is smarter than your memories of how to behave. "Well, I guess I won't go tonight," and then you'll think of the reason. You stop listening to that reason. And you absentees, you force yourself to come to every meeting unless there is an awfully good reason for it. You force yourself to come here and watch when you go out that door and get in that car the fifty reasons that death gives you for not coming here.

"Well, let's see, it's certain miles out at fifty-seven cents a gallon – whatever it is. That's two dollars gasoline...two dollars to get in – that's four dollars." For Heaven's sake, you are living as if you're never going to die. Try giving up that TV show some night in favor of eternal life.

Now look. Not so fast... So you come here, so you walk in the door, and so you sit down – the battle is just begun. What's been your state of mind in the last forty minutes that I've been talking? Have you even paid close attention or is your mind gone off somewhere. Have you been thinking about something else you'd rather be doing? Have you been hypnotized in the wrong way?

I'll take you, I'll take you with me if you'll let me – everyone of you in this room. I'm not going to take your husband, ladies. I am not going to take your wife, gentlemen. As a matter of fact, I am not going to take you. Trash shall not enter the Castle.

You think you're kidding me? Do you think you're kidding me? For your sake, I can't afford to be kidded by you and I'm not. I see the tricks you play that you don't even know are tricks. I see your tears. I see your pretense. I see your glancing at me and glancing away and I know what is

going through your mind. You're going to trick yourself all the way down into the swamp.

Rightfully, hopefully there is something that is not deceived by my self-deception or your self-deception. You, in your present state, don't know what it is because all you know is self-deception. All you know is the films with its thousands of little evasions. But I am telling you as a fact that it does exist.

And I'm telling you as a fact, if you begin to remember this one exercise I gave you, of watching the tension start to rise and watch your mental hand rise, reach over to push the button to protect yourself, to blab, to do anything, I want you to know that your very awareness of your hand reaching over to press the button will stop it. But it won't be a smooth stop. It will be a jolt, because there is a jolt between time and eternity. There is a jolt between practice and learning. There is a jolt between knowledge and wisdom. But you can become aware of the jolt and don't do anything about that.

I told you, the devil will have his tricks ready to have you try to do something about the shock of your embarrassment. Never do anything about your embarrassment! Be fully ashamed, but knowing that you're ashamed. Till the time comes where it will become a daily practice for you to watch yourself do the usual sick, neurotic, self-enclosed thing. Catch yourself about to do that, and something screams at the top of the voice, "No!"

All shakings are not of you. All shakings are of the pseudo-you. All shakings are of the devil. Only the devil trembles. God never trembles. Essence never trembles. This means through your self work, through your recovery of who you really are, you will shake less and less and less and less, because you're getting rid of the devil who's very nature it is to shake – you see. And you become more poised and more calm so that you'll be able to die consciously too.

We'll take a break.