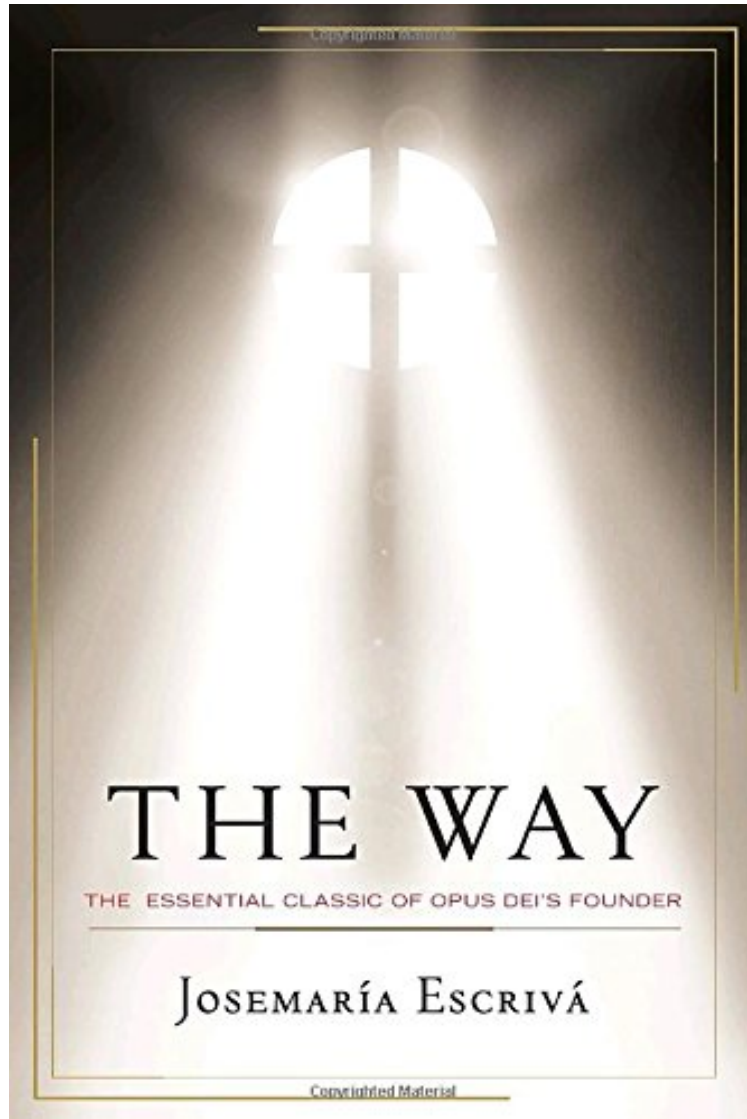


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The Way: The Essential Classic of Opus Dei's Founder

Josemara Escriv

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Reflecting Josemaria Escriva's belief that God can be found in professional and everyday settings, *The Way* blends passages from sacred Scripture with anecdotes drawn from Escriva's life and work, snatches of conversation, and selections from his personal letters. The direct, conversational writing style and its deeply felt humanity are among the book's main attractions and beautifully convey the belief that the human is not foreign to the divine and that the fully Christian spiritual attitude can be described as unity of life. Since it was first published in 1939, more than four and a half million copies of *The Way* have been sold in forty-three different languages. This handsome paperback edition will take its place alongside such seminal works as John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul*, Thomas Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, and Teresa of Avila's *The Interior Castle*.

About the Author Josemaria Escriv (1902-1975), a Spanish priest, founded Opus Dei in 1928. John Paul II proclaimed him a saint on October 6, 2002. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Character 1 Don't let your life be sterile. Be useful. Blaze a trail. Shine forth with the light of your faith and of your love. With your apostolic life wipe out the slimy and filthy mark left by the impure sowers of hatred. And light up all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you carry in your heart. 2 May your behavior and your conversation be such that everyone who sees or hears you can say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ. 3 Maturity. Stop making faces and acting up like a child! Your bearing ought to reflect the peace and order in your soul. 4 Don't say, "That's the way I am--it's my character." It's your lack of character. *Esto vir!*--Be a man! 5 Get used to saying No. 6 Turn your back on the deceiver when he whispers in your ear, "Why complicate your life?" 7 Don't have a "small town" outlook. Enlarge your heart until it becomes universal--"catholic." Don't fly like a barnyard hen when you can soar like an eagle. 8 Serenity. Why lose your temper if by losing it you offend God, you trouble your neighbor, you give yourself a bad time . . . and in the end you have to set things aright, anyway? 9 What you have just said, say it in another tone, without anger, and what you say will have more force . . . and above all, you won't offend God. 10 Never reprimand anyone while you feel provoked over a fault that has been committed. Wait until the next day, or even longer. Then make your remonstrance calmly and with a purified intention. You'll gain more with an affectionate word than you ever would from three hours of quarreling. Control your temper. 11 Will-power. Energy. Example. What has to be done is done . . . without wavering . . . without worrying about what others think . . . Otherwise, Cisneros* would not have been Cisneros; nor Teresa of Avila, Saint Teresa; nor Igo of Loyola, Saint Ignatius. God and daring! *Regnare Christum volumus!*--"We want Christ to reign!" 12 Let obstacles only make you bigger. The grace of our Lord will not be lacking: *Inter medium montium pertransibunt aquae!*--"Through the very midst of the mountains the waters shall pass." You will pass through mountains! What does it matter that you have to curtail your activity for the moment, if later, like a spring which has been compressed, you'll advance much farther than you ever dreamed? 13 Get rid of those useless thoughts which are at best a waste of time. 14 Don't waste your energy and your time--which belong to God--throwing stones at the dogs that bark at you on the way. Ignore them. 15 Don't put off your work until tomorrow. 16 Give in? Be just commonplace? You, a sheep-like follower? You were born to be a leader! Among us there is no place for the lukewarm. Humble yourself, and Christ will kindle in you again the fire of love. 17 Don't succumb to that disease of character whose symptoms are a general lack of seriousness, unsteadiness in action and speech, foolishness--in a word, frivolity. And that frivolity, mind you, which makes your plans so void--"so filled with emptiness"--will make of you a lifeless and useless dummy, unless you react in time--not tomorrow, but now! 18 You go on being worldly, frivolous, and giddy because you are a coward. What is it, if not cowardice, to refuse to face yourself? 19 Will-power. A very important quality. Don't disregard the little things, which are really never futile or trivial. For by the constant practice of repeated self-denial in little things, with God's grace you will increase in strength and manliness of character. In that way you'll first become master of yourself, and then a guide and a leader: to compel, to urge, to draw others with your example and with your word and with your knowledge and with your power. 20 You clash with the character of one person or another. . . . It has to be that way--you are not a dollar bill to be liked by everyone. Besides, without those clashes which arise in dealing with your neighbors, how could you ever lose the sharp corners, the edges--imperfections and defects of your character--and acquire the order, the smoothness, and the firm mildness of charity, of perfection? If your character and that of those around you were soft and sweet like marshmallows, you would never become a saint. 21 Excuses. You'll never lack them if you want to avoid your duties. What a lot of rationalizing! Don't stop to think about excuses. Get rid of them and do what you should. 22 Be firm! Be strong! Be a man! And then . . . be an angel! 23 You say you can't do more? Couldn't it be . . . that you can't do less? 24 You are ambitious: for knowledge . . . for leadership. You want to be daring. Good. Fine. But let it be for Christ, for Love. 25 Don't argue. Arguments usually bring no light because the light is smothered by emotion. 26 Matrimony is a holy sacrament. When the time comes for you to receive it, ask your spiritual director or your confessor to suggest an appropriate book. Then you'll be

better prepared to bear worthily the burdens of a home.²⁷ Do you laugh because I tell you that you have a "vocation to marriage"? Well, you have just that--a vocation. Commend yourself to Saint Raphael that he may keep you pure, as he did Tobias, until the end of the way.²⁸ Marriage is for the rank and file, not for the officers of Christ's army. For, unlike food, which is necessary for every individual, procreation is necessary only for the species, and individuals can dispense with it. A desire to have children? Behind us we shall leave children--many children . . . and a lasting trail of light, if we sacrifice the selfishness of the flesh.*²⁹ The limited and pitiful happiness of the selfish man, who withdraws into his shell, his ivory tower . . . is not difficult to attain in this world. But that happiness of the selfish is not lasting. For this false semblance of Heaven are you going to forsake the Joy of Glory without end?³⁰ You're shrewd. But don't tell me you are young. Youth gives all it can--it gives itself without reserve.³¹ Selfish! You . . . always looking out for yourself. You seem unable to feel the brotherhood of Christ. In others you don't see brothers; you see stepping-stones. I can foresee your complete failure. And when you are down, you'll expect others to treat you with the charity you're unwilling to show them.³² You'll never be a leader if you see others only as stepping-stones to get ahead. You'll be a leader if you are ambitious for the salvation of all souls. You can't live with your back turned on everyone; you have to be eager to make others happy.³³ You never want "to get to the bottom of things." At times, because of politeness. Other times--most times--because you fear hurting yourself. Sometimes again, because you fear hurting others. But always because of fear! With that fear of digging for the truth you'll never be a man of good judgment.³⁴ Don't be afraid of the truth, even though the truth may mean your death.³⁵ There are many pretty terms I don't like: you call cowardice "prudence." Your "prudence" gives an opportunity to those enemies of God, without any ideas in their heads, to pass themselves off as scholars, and so reach positions that they never should attain.³⁶ Yes, that abuse can be eradicated. It's a lack of character to let it continue as something hopeless--without any possible remedy. Don't evade your duty. Do it in a forthright way, even though others may not.³⁷ You have, as they say, "the gift of gab." But in spite of all your talk, you can't get me to justify--by calling it "providential"--what has no justification.³⁸ Can it be true (I just can't believe it!) that on earth there are no men--only bellies?³⁹ "Pray that I may never be satisfied with what is easy," you say. I've already prayed. Now it is up to you to carry out that fine resolution.⁴⁰ Faith, joy, optimism. But not the folly of closing your eyes to reality.⁴¹ What a sublime way of carrying on with your empty follies, and what a way of getting somewhere in the world: rising, always rising simply by "weighing little," by having nothing inside--neither in your head nor in your heart!⁴² Why those variations in your character? When are you going to apply your will to something? Drop that craze for laying cornerstones, and finish at least one of your projects.⁴³ Don't be so touchy. The least thing offends you. People have to weigh their words to talk to you even about the most trivial matter. Don't feel hurt if I tell you that you are . . . unbearable. Unless you change, you'll never be of any use.⁴⁴ Use the polite excuse that Christian charity and good manners require. But then . . . keep on going with holy shamelessness, without stopping until you have reached the summit in the fulfillment of your duty.⁴⁵ Why feel hurt by the unjust things people say of you? You would be even worse, if God ever left you. Keep on doing good, and shrug your shoulders.⁴⁶ Don't you think that equality, as many people understand it, is synonymous with injustice?⁴⁷ That pose and those important airs don't fit you well. It's obvious that they're false. At least, try not to use them either with God, or with your director, or with your brothers; and then there will be between them and you one barrier less.⁴⁸ You lack character. What a mania for interfering in everything! You are bent on being the salt of every dish. And you won't mind if I speak clearly--you haven't the qualities of salt: you can't be dissolved and pass unnoticed, as salt does. You lack a spirit of sacrifice. And you abound in a spirit of curiosity and ostentation.⁴⁹ Keep quiet. Don't be "babyish," a caricature of a child, a tattle-tale, a trouble-maker, a squealer. With your stories and tales you have chilled the warm glow of charity; you couldn't have done more harm. And if by any chance you--your wagging tongue--have shaken down the strong walls of other people's perseverance, your own perseverance ceases to be a grace of God. It has become a treacherous instrument of the enemy.⁵⁰ You're curious and inquisitive, prying and nosy. Aren't you ashamed that even in your defects you are not much of a man? Be a man, and instead of poking into other people's lives, get to know what you really are yourself.⁵¹ Your manly spirit--simple and straightforward--is crushed when you find yourself entangled in gossip and scandalous talk. You don't understand how it could happen, and you never wished to be involved in it anyway. Suffer the humiliation that such talk causes you, and let the experience urge you to greater discretion.⁵² When you must judge others, why put into your criticism the bitterness of your own failures?⁵³ That critical spirit--granted you mean well--should never be directed toward the apostolate in which you work nor toward your brothers. In your supernatural undertakings that critical spirit--forgive me for saying it--can do a lot of harm. For when you get involved in judging the work of others, you are not doing anything constructive. Really you have no right to judge, even if you have the highest possible motives, as I admit. And with your negative attitude you hold up the progress of others. "Then," you ask worriedly, "my critical spirit, which is the keynote of my character . . . ?" Listen. I'll set your mind at ease. Take pen and paper. Write down simply and confidently--yes, and briefly--what is worrying you. Give the note to your superior, and don't think any more about it. He is in charge and has the grace of state. He will file the note . . . or will throw it in the waste-basket. And since your criticism is not gossip and you do it for the highest motives, it's all the same to you.⁵⁴ Conform? It is a word found only in the vocabulary of those ("You might as well conform," they say) who have no will to fight--the lazy, the

cunning, the cowardly--because they know they are defeated before they start.⁵⁵ Man, listen! Even though you may be like a child--and you really are one in the eyes of God--be a little less naive: don't put your brothers "on the spot" before strangers.